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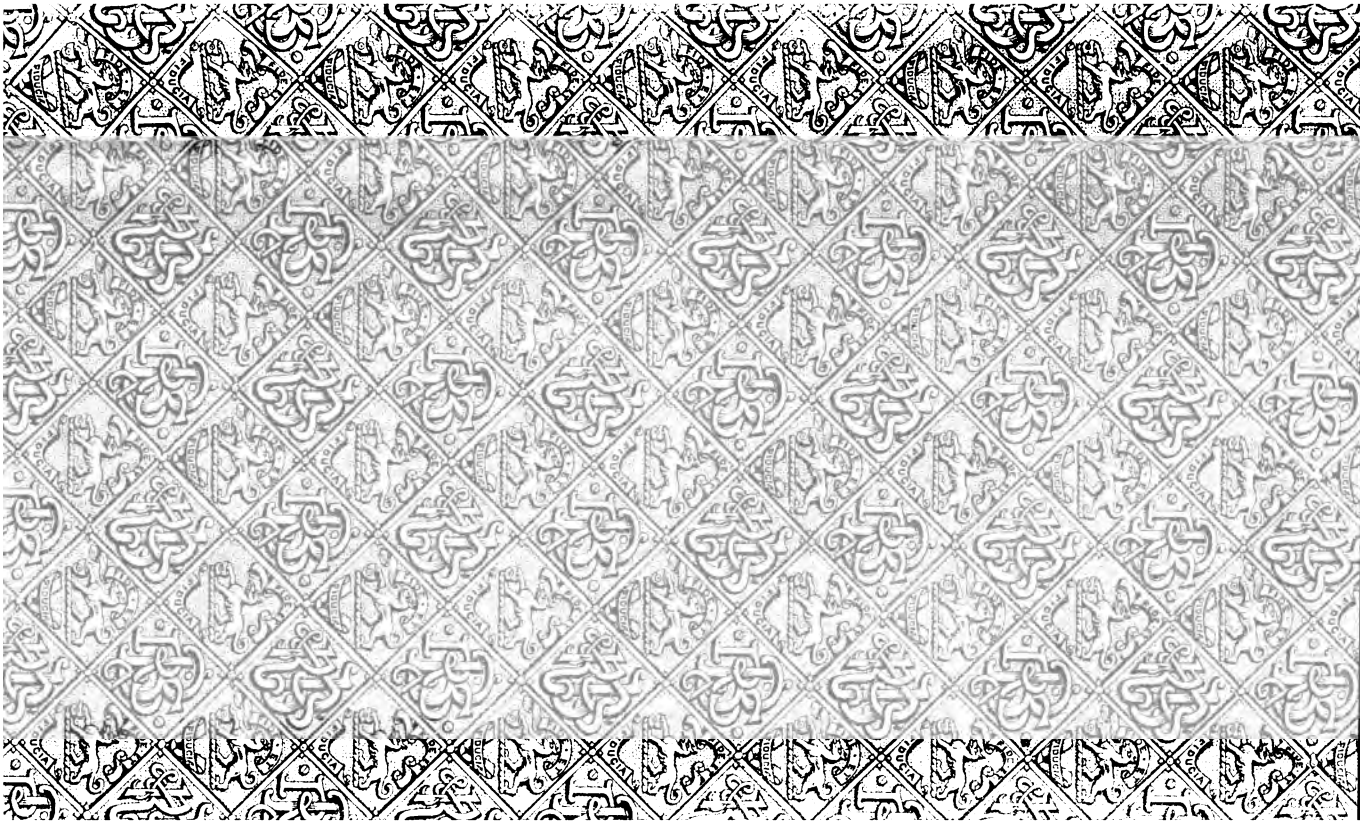

WESTOVER'S WARD.

WESTOVER'S WARD.

BY

ALGERNON RIDGEWAY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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WESTOVER'S WARD.

CHAPTER I.

THE cousins rode on in silence for a full half-mile, Phil saying over and over to himself the while, "How shall I tell her; how shall I break it to her? I would rather cut my throat than give her pain." Still, he knew that he must face the inevitable; so he cleared his throat and ventured at last, though it seemed to him as if every word were weighted with the nether millstone.

"When did you hear from Meade last,

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Cousin Gay?" "How like a hypocrite I talk!" he thought.

"Not for ages," answered Gay, thinking more of her heated horse at this moment than of her brother, for the roan was snorting and trembling. "Meade is a wretched correspondent; he writes on anniversaries, such as a birthday or Christmas, but not much oftener. My father says that his letters are notes, and his notes checks. He seems to be satisfied. For my part, I am not." Miss Westover leaned forward and patted the roan on his neck.

"Was he well when you heard last?" pursued Phil, faintly.

"Oh yes." Gay gave a laugh, with a proud note in it. "I have known that brother of mine for twenty years and three months, and have never known him to admit a day's illness in all that time.

He is terribly proud and terribly determined. Ah! he has in him the making of a great man. Don't you think so, Phil?"

"I shall not tell her," said Phil to himself, resolutely, as they paced along; then he sighed deeply, and for the first time Gay responded to his mood. She saw that something was wrong.

"What is the matter, Phil? Has anything happened at home?" She fancied that it was something about the wheat-crop; then she recalled that her father had said that the crops had never been finer. "What is the matter, Phil? Tell me, has anything happened?" She leaned forward, and laid her hand upon his horse's neck.

"Yes," groaned Phil, "something has happened. There is a great trouble——" He could get no further.

"Nothing has happened to those pretty little heifers?" began Gay, tentatively.

Phil shook his head.

"Or the lambs?" she ventured a second time.

Perspiration now hung in drops to Phil's forehead, though the moon had brought a breeze in her train. They were near the mill, a half-mile from the gate of Lady's-Meade. "Now or never," thought Phil; and he hesitated no longer. He seized his cousin's hand, and cried out in a burst of anguish—

"Would to God I could save you from this trouble, but I can't. It's coming, Gay, don't you see? My poor child, why, why am I the one to break it to you, I who would sooner lie dead before you?" His utterance choked.

"Coming! what is coming?" repeated Gay, vaguely, checking her horse, which

in obedience to her hand stood stock-still in the road, tossing his mane. But this operation proving too active for the slumberous influence of the calm June evening, he next proceeded to nibble the dainty succulent shoots of the beech saplings crowding the road ditch. "Phil, what trouble do you mean?" demanded Gay now, in a frightened voice, letting fall the bridle. She was too startled, too shocked by the thought of sorrow in the abstract to localize it or apply it to herself.

"Are you prepared for a shock?" inquired Phil, tremulously.

"Oh, tell me, tell me, tell me! don't torture me!" cried Gay, covering her eyes with her two hands, as if preparing for a physical blow which was to be dealt her by her cousin.

Phil groaned. Torture, that was what

he would have given his life to save her from. "Life is uncertain, death alone is certain," he began solemnly. "The man who was alive yesterday is dead to-day, and——"

"Meade! Meade is dead?" shrieked Gay, lifting her voice in a high prolonged note of horror, as if she both asked and answered her own question at the same moment.

Phil bowed his head, but did not answer. His silence was enough. How brief a time it takes to pass from joy to grief, or from grief to joy! The beginning of the transition consists in the suspension of either extreme, and is preluded by a benumbing of feeling rather than by the rousing of it. It is not until feeling revives that real sorrow begins. One has to adjust one's whole existence to the changed order of things; one has to set

the harmonies and discords of life in a new key.

Gay's first feeling was one of stunning horror; her next was one of pity for herself, as she saw a vision of herself walking through life henceforward without the brother who had been her pride. She was trying to view herself in this changed relation objectively, and the picture drawn by imagination excited her own compassion. But with all this she did not realize that her intensely living brother was dead; she merely felt that he was gone farther away from them all than he had ever been before, and she did not lose a sense of coldness in her emotion until she saw Phil standing on the ground beside her, pressing her hand in both of his, and shedding great hot tears upon it.

"Oh, Gay, Gay, don't look so!" he

entreated, patting her hands, her shoulder, and smoothing her hair, in the helplessness of his affection. "Give way to your feelings here."

He threw an arm about her, for she had sunk forward on the neck of the roan, who still nibbled the young beech twigs.

"Let me take you down," he proposed; and then he lifted her gently out of the saddle.

She rested her head on his shoulder. Phil had prayed for this, but not that it should come through grief. She let him place her on the turf, close to the run that trickled with a sweet wail through the ditch grasses, and, still with her head against him, she finally gave vent to her tears—tempestuous, intermingled with sobs, such as one sheds in life's prime. They sat thus, Phil knew not how long, but he whispered at last—

"No one can ever take Meade's place; but you will look upon me sometimes as your brother—won't you, Gay?"

His blue eyes wandered over her wistfully. Gay put out her hand to him; he kissed it a morsel too passionately, he thought, and blushed for such indelicacy, sitting there in the moonlight. Poor wasted blush! Gay did not know that it was a lover's. She was relaxed from emotion. She longed ardently, as the young do, for comfort and for physical sympathy. They were both startled by a figure coming up on horseback, and saying, as he reined in a few paces off from them—

"Marse Phil an' Mis' Gay, shore's my soul's my own! Wot you doin' thar, Marse Phil? Mis' Gay's pa—he's been a' sendin' an' a scoutin' ober de whole o' Ladys-Meade. Yes, sah, an' he wouldn't hab

nuthin' but me to tuk'n de grey mare an' steer straight fo' de Co't-house, an' tote Mis' Gay home; an' hee'ah's you a settin' hee'ah side om de mint bank a' studyin' an' a projeckin'."

The old codger only needed a sufficient quantity of moonlight and a second glance to see that something was wrong.

"My father! my mother! what shall I say to them?"

Gay sprang up, roused to an intense consciousness of the duties that grief entails; for it is not only a condition, but a sphere of action as well. Phil helped her to mount, and they rode fast now, beyond the mill which Gay had passed a couple of hours before so light-heartedly; past the young grape-vines running over the snake-fence, along the lane, and into the gate of Lady's-Meade. Sadly, silently, they galloped abreast beneath the arch of

peccans and magnolias—a stately colonnade yielding a half-mile of shade, so dense that the moon could not spill a bit of her sweet self through it. Gay could not think—she only felt; her heart and temples throbbed. On the piazza she saw her father standing. The moon shone full on his white beard and hair; he looked grave and full of rebuke.

"My daughter," he began, as Gay ran up the steps, "this is the first time that you have ever displeased me."

"Yes, papa, I know;" and Gay threw herself weeping into her father's arms.

It was only natural that Gay's tears should be self-healing, but it was otherwise with Colonel Westover. He did not turn, in this affliction, to the comfort of religion, as did Mrs. Westover; nor did he find surcease from sorrow in dreams of the future, as did his daughter. He was

without support; the prop of his age was gone. He grew years older in a single night. He had always looked on life with a cheery eye, but now he crept about the house, the shadow of his former self, bowed, tremulous. The servants gazed at their master's once proud figure, stooping now. They sought for the beaming smile; it was transformed into a pervading moodiness; they shook their heads and mumbled, "Po' ole marse!" The dogs stretched themselves out in a lack-lustre way and slept.

"What have I done that I should be so punished?" Colonel Westover would say, first to himself, then to his wife and daughter, through the long watches with grief that wore away the summer days and nights; for he was a judicial man, with an almost superstitious feeling that troubles are sent as punishments.

"It is God's will, Mr. Westover," his wife would say, wiping her tears away. "We must learn to say, 'Not my will, but Thine, Lord, Thy will be done.'" And the good lady would go about her duties or take up her knitting with a look of subdued patience, picturing to herself her son in heaven, the which was an extension of Lady's-Meade, the archangels being strikingly like her son, and the angels so many Gays mounted upon wings.

The first brief note from Harrison had conveyed the announcement of Meade's death, and nothing more; but in the course of a few days a second letter came, telling about the marriage, the wife he had left behind, and dwelling upon the dying son's request that this wife should be taken to their home and hearts instead of him.

"She is all that is left of Meade," wrote the friend. "My pen can hardly write for grief; for your son was the purest, truest man that ever drew the breath of life, and his wife is the loveliest, as well as the most helpless, young creature ever left to fight the battle of life alone—a widow and not yet twenty."

"Wife—widow!" echoed the white lips of the Westovers; and they looked at each other with wide-open eyes, in which the tears were suddenly arrested, for grief was swallowed up momentarily in sheer amazement. "Wife!" and they sat down in silence on the black horsehair chairs in the darkened drawing-room, striving to take in this new position of affairs. Meade married!

Harrison had written other things in his letter; he had explained that the widowed Angela would not come empty-handed to

Lady's-Meade, as she was, by her husband's death, possessed of shares in one of the richest mines in the state.

Miss Steptoe also wrote a few lines that were sweet and womanly, and it was what *she* told that drew the first really healing drops to Mrs. Westover's eyes. Indeed, Harrison's letter had been carefully overlooked by Fanny Steptoe before it was allowed to go, and the story of Meade's marriage was couched in language suggested by an exquisite tact.

Colonel Westover could as yet find no place in his heart for any feeling but rebellious grief over his son's death; but Mrs. Westover was beginning to yearn over the widowed bride; her bosom thrilled at the thought of her son's wife.

"For our boy's sake she shall come to us, shall she not?" pleaded the mother,

leaning over her husband's chair and stroking his hair. "We shall see him live again in her."

But the colonel shook his head and frowned. What did he care for the stranger about whom Fanny Steptoe had written so touchingly? She might come or not, for what he cared. His mind was absorbed by the cruelty of this blow—Meade's death; he rebelled against it; he had not deserved it, and he defied God. Gay, too, in the midst of her sorrow, was severe. Though her brother lay dead, unable to defend himself, yet she judged him for his marriage, crying passionately—

"Meade has deceived us all! Why did he not tell us that he had a wife?"

"He has not deceived us. Gay, you shall not talk so of your brother," interrupted Mrs. Westover, stirred out of her

accustomed gentleness by the thought that the dead cannot err. "My boy could not deceive. He was the last man in the world to deceive his father or his mother. See what a stranger writes of him;" and she drew from her bosom Fanny Steptoe's letter and re-read the lines. "'Mr. Westover was the soul of gentlemanly honour, and the accident that robbed him of life robbed Denver of a man who would have caused the State of his adoption to be proud of him some day.'"

The mother's voice trembled with pride at words that praised her boy; for her grief, like her love, was unselfish.

"Besides, this Miss Steptoe—she must be a sweet woman—tells us that your brother did write immediately after his marriage, which, it seems, was sudden. By our not replying, they suppose that the letter never reached us, which it did not."

"And why was this marriage sudden?" demanded the daughter, sharply.

"I do not know," was Mrs. Westover's reply, folding her hands in her lap. "Whatever your brother's reason was, it was a good one, that I know. He was a dear pious boy."

Gay turned away impatiently, oppressed alike by her father's despair and her mother's resignation, though she could sympathize far more keenly with the father's state of mind than with the mother's. She could no longer endure the atmosphere of that darkened drawing-room, where, with the dreary gregariousness of a family in affliction, they were nursing grief. Out of doors she went; and as she drew the door softly to after her, Mrs. Westover turned towards her husband and whispered anxiously—

"You do not blame our boy, do you, dear?"

"Boy, boy! I have no boy," was the harsh answer. "What is he to-day? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Instead of saying 'he,' one should say 'it,' of that which has now, to-day, no existence whatever —excepting in memory," he continued bitterly. "Ay, *there* is the sting—memory. When life is wiped out, why can memory not be wiped out too?"

Mrs. Westover gave a long shuddering sigh. She got down upon her knees beside him, took his two hands in both of hers, and murmured with solemn cadences, "Here lies the triumph of faith, dear; we are to be made perfect by faith."

"Faith!" echoed the colonel, querulously; "where is the good of faith? Can it give us back the boy? I don't care to buy a

higher place in heaven at the expense of my son's life."

This was a cruel arrow. Mrs. Westover moaned. In all their married life, he had never made a really cutting speech until now; but sorrow changes natures.

"My beautiful, successful boy!" he cried, stretching his arms out. "I held him a baby in these arms, and he seemed such a little man from the first," he groaned.

Wife, daughter, God, could not reach him—could not touch the softer passions of his heart. She bowed her head upon his knees, but he was oblivious of her. For a long time they sat thus, and then she glided softly out of the room; he did not notice either her presence or her absence—both were alike. She crept to her bed-chamber, made the door fast, sank

upon her knees, and poured out her whole soul in prayer.

When she came forth from this chamber of peace, her countenance still glowed with a solemn radiance; the lamp of her faith shed its light about her as she went from one homely duty to another; her thoughts were filled, not with herself, but with heavenly communion.

Out of doors the sky changed its complexion from brilliant blue to sodden grey, while heaps of cloud were piling against the western horizon. The air was dense and oppressive, and occasionally a gust of warm wind swirled in from the sea, charged with flurries of rain; it sobbed through the live-oaks, tearing off, now and then, a handful of leaves. On the strip of sand-beach stood the cows in a disconsolate sort of way; everything seemed interpenetrated by the suddenness of the

atmospheric change, and the whole of nature was despondent.

Gay wandered about listlessly, feeling stunned; the world had changed, and she could not realize that it would ever change again, and that one of the laws of this existence is change—constantly recurring change; action and reaction. She could not understand that sorrow and joy are not lodged in the event, but in the person, and that a day was bound to come when she should be adjusted to the brother's death, and possibly to his marriage too.

She found herself in front of a small brick house which bore the dignified title of "office," though it had been unused for years, and was become the abode of spiders and cats. It had once served as a school-house; for here Meade had received instruction in Latin and geometry from

one of the rectors of Evelynton, and Gay had learned within its walls to spell c-a-t and d-o-g in her primer. Meade Westover's boyish treasures were still to be found here. His rabbit-trap, a worn-out saddle, some rusty tools that he had once used, an old trigonometry in calf—memories of him haunted the building like ghosts.

Gay pushed open the door, entered the musty room, and sat down in a window-seat. She had thought it a great privilege to be allowed to spend rainy mornings here when a child. How many days linked with him came back crowding upon her memory!—October days, musical with the delicious droppings of ripe fall weather, when the sound of a nut swinging to the ground, and the grating of the woodpecker's bill in the tree bark, mingled with Meade's merry whistle, as he would

cry out, "Come along, Gaysie, let's be off to the Dancing Bottom, and see if there have been any rabbits caught?" Sweet, unforgetable days they were, when she sprang along at her brother's heels, threading the labyrinths of the marsh-grasses, waiting to be lifted over ditches too wide to be cleared by a girl's bound, listening to his mimicry of bird-notes; indeed, he could imitate them so well that he would hide, to see whether Gay could tell his whistle from the whip-poor-will's, or the Bob White's. At the trap he was sure to say, if a rabbit was in jail, "Here's the little fellow; shall we let him go, Gay?"

When the boy's school-days were over, the office had been converted into a private study, where the young man, in the first dignity of adolescence, enjoyed hours of seclusion. Young ladies came to

Lady's-Meade on visits, and set their caps at the shy fellow, who cared very little for young women, whoever they might be. Betty Carter had been one of the most notable of those who laid siege to Meade's heart. "Let's go tease your brother," she would say; and, dragging Gay reluctantly after her, she ran to assail the young man in his fastness. He often hid to get rid of her; once he jumped out of the back window of the "office," just as Betty thrust her black poll in at the front door. Yes, the four panes had never been replaced, and Gay could see the hole he had made in the window yet.

There was a kind of luxury in recalling these melancholy histories; and when Gay interrupted them, it was to think of her father. "I must go and comfort him," she murmured to herself.

But the time was not yet come for com-

fort. The colonel was of too military a habit to forego certain regular duties, such as meals, and the supervising of his "stawk," though he had but little stomach for food. It seemed as if a wizard had changed the bountiful stores of Lady's-Meade into the bread of affliction. In gloomy silence, the colonel carved the ham, dressed carefully as usual, but hardly tasting the morsels which he was at pains to lay upon his plate. In vain did Mrs. Westover and Gay make pretence of eating and of keeping up the conversation; the colonel made no attempt to conceal his pre-occupation and his grief. He sat for a while in rigid silence; then he would push away his plate, get up from the table, and go away to the front porch, whence his footsteps could be heard by the hour, as they struck the wooden planks. After this it was no longer necessary for Gay and her mother to keep

up their pretence of eating and of conversation.

Surely these were dreary times for Lady's-Meade. Grief is a transition period; its first days of awful negation were soon superseded by days of excitement—that of receiving the visits of condoling friends. Mrs. Westover was, of course, exonerated from this task, seeing only her nearest relatives in her bedroom. But Gay was continuously jarred by the manufactured sympathy and ill-concealed curiosity which, after a few days, streamed in upon her from all sides. Every one in the county called; all day long carriages rolled up the avenue to the house, while Crutch Amos did nothing but hold horses for ladies to alight, or lead buggies to the hitching-block.

Betty Carter was the first to come. A tear dropped from her eye when she

spoke of Meade, and asked questions innumerable about his wife. She had reserved a portion of her heart for this cousin, and had hoped that he would come back some fine day and marry her; but, alas for the hopes of youth! Meade had married and was dead; it seemed, too, as if his marriage separated him from her even more than his death.

"Poor Meade!"—she leaned back in the armchair in the drawing-room—"poor Meade! I cannot realize it, Gay; can you?"

"It seems as if I could realize nothing but death now, Cousin Betty," answered Gay, drearily. She had esteem for Betty Carter, for, though a romp, the latter had a kind heart. "I seem to be steeped in it. Have you ever felt as if you tasted death, smelt death—as if you had a perpetual image of it, swooping down on

some other victim, and you were always wondering who would be the next? Death seems to me now a personality whose acquaintance I never made before; but, once known, I feel as if he would never leave me — never let me alone." She shuddered.

"Oh, dear Gay, you must not be so morbid!" and Betty Carter folded her cousin in her arms.

"It is so easy to say 'morbid,'" Gay managed to falter out, though struggling with sobs; "but how can you help it?"

This Betty could not explain; she was kind, but she was not of an introspective turn, and she had never been called to experience any but the fanciful sorrow that fall to the lot of young women who have been carefully shielded all their lives. She thought that Gay was morbid, but

she had no theory for overcoming it. She gave warm kisses and embraces instead of an answer, and when next she spoke it was to ask questions of her own.

"Poor Meade! and he was married; whom did you say he married, Gay?"

"A Miss Cloud."

"Miss Cloud!" echoed Betty Carter, reflectively. "Some rich Western girl, I reckon?"

Gay did not answer.

"Was she very rich?"

Miss Carter strove to find a reason for this marriage, when Meade Westover had such hosts of sweet cousins at home.

"I don't know."

"A distinguished family?"

Miss Carter considered it legitimate to find out all she could about the man she had loved and wanted to marry.

"You forget that my brother's marriage

was a surprise to us all, and that as yet we know little more of his wife than you yourself, Cousin Betty," said Gay, with dignity; then, as if to give her unknown sister-in-law some intrinsic value, she added, "We have heard that she is beautiful."

"Beautiful, beautiful!" echoed Miss Carter, pensively (beauty was not one of her own attributes). "She must have been a belle; one of the belles of Denver, I suppose." Then she fell to musing, looking up with a start at last, and crying out, "Oh, Gay, yonder come the Roseghill horses, with Mrs. Wormley behind them, I reckon! It is too much for you to be expected to see all these people; do run upstairs, and let me see her in your place. I would so love to help you, dear, if I could;" and Betty was sincere. But Gay shook her head.

"No; I appreciate your offer, Cousin Betty, but mamma will be better satisfied this way."

The Roseghill carriage drove up to the front steps as Betty Carter folded her cousin in another embrace; and Crutch Amos began doing the honours according to his own ideas of propriety.

"Yes, mistus," he said, assisting Mrs. Wormley to descend from her coach—"yes, mistus, Marse Meade, he done dade. It goes moughty hard wid ole marse; he isn't like hisself any mo'. But ole mis', she's barin' it like an angel ob de Almighty. She's done got 'ligion, yes'm, dat she has. Miss Gay? yes'm, she's peart-like; but these is hard times fur Lady's-Meade, these is; dee ain't nuffin happen like dis sence de waw—nome, de-ain't. Dee-ah's Miss Gay now," catching a sight of the young lady in the front door.

Mrs. Wormley's visit was a long and wearing one. Roseghill being twelve miles away, its mistress had to be treated with hospitality, and her horses also, before she would think of bringing her visit to a close.

Gay did her best. Aunt Portwine brought forth cake and peach cordial, glad to see something so comfortable going on as company and eating. While Mrs. Wormley nibbled fruit cake and played with the crumbs, sweeping them together with one hand in the folds of her dress, she too asked questions.

"The marriage was a sudden one, you say?"

It was sudden, so Gay did not respond to this, but sat quietly. To the question, "Was it a good match?" "I do not know; we have heard very little of the lady as yet," was the girl's weary reply.

"Haven't you heard that she was an heiress?" hazarded Mrs. Wormley, possessed with the idea that all Western people were rich.

Mrs. Wormley, living retired from the world, and fed upon the memories of an old South, looked upon everything that happened in the outside world as an adventure. So she tasted the sweet flavour of coming wealth in the very cake-crumbs; and then went away and spread through the county the report that Mrs. Meade Westover was a Western heiress of untold wealth.

"What a gold mine for Evelynton!" said the Rev. Philip Hoggard. "We must interest her in parish work."

And so dame Rumour was busy with Angela's name before she came to Lady's-Meade; and the whole of Werewocomico was ready to grant her the homage

which even the unsophisticated pay to money.

Mr. Hoggard, the rector of Evelynton, Mrs. Westover's clerical pet, came daily to Lady's-Meade, and his coming was a delight to its mistress, because she could take counsel with him about her husband, who was rebellious, and her daughter, who was wilful. Had Mr. Hoggard remained satisfied with this excellent gentlewoman's admiration of himself and reverence of his cloth, all would have been well; but he had a craving desire to compel every one else to the same condition of worship — Miss Westover included — and this made him insufferable to her. Mrs. Westover and the Reverend Philip had a long interview in the shut-up parlour; then the former came out on the piazza to her husband and said, with a pressure upon his hand—

"Won't you come in and talk to Mr. Hoggard, dear? He has spoken beautifully this morning. I think he can comfort you."

"How can he comfort me?" asked Colonel Westover, impatiently. "Can he raise my son from the dead?"

"No, of course not, dear," answered Mrs. Westover, reproachfully; "but he can explain to you that our boy is not dead, but living in glory; and he can describe the joys of heaven."

"What does Phil Hoggard know about the joys of heaven, Mary? Has he been there?" the colonel retorted, with something of his ancient fire.

"No, but the eyes of faith——" she began.

"The eyes of faith cannot explain mysteries. No, no, Mary. Do you talk to Parson Hoggard, and get as much of

this comfort as you can; but leave me alone, please; will you?"

Mrs. Westover's eyes filled. Her husband spoke roughly, but her heart was full of mercy; so she only stooped to imprint a kiss of divinest tenderness upon his forehead, and went in search of her daughter.

The colonel sat immovable in his arm-chair and relapsed into moodiness, as who should say, "Here I and Sorrow sit." Adversity alters the nature; where the weak turn sour, the strong turn bitter. It was thus with Colonel Westover.

At her mother's request, Gay went obediently enough into the parlour, and took her seat on the sofa beside the rector of Evelynton, her face stretched to its most delicate nerve upon the rack of suspense. She was at the age when young women are less in pursuit of truth than

of the teachers of truth; caring less for virtue in the abstract than for the heroes showing specific virtues like brilliant meteors against the dark background of human nature. In her presence Mr. Hoggard, with the best intentions in the world, felt awkward. After a moment's hesitation, he took her passive hand into his moist grasp, and held it so long that she had to squeeze her fingers out one by one.

"I thought she would be in tears," said the rector of Evelynton to himself, "like other girls." He must speak, however, so he began to talk, with a good deal of prolixity, about heaven, whose geography he described in set terms—too much, perhaps, in the style of one who regards himself as surveyor of a piece of territory which he held in fee, and for which he was authorized to issue grants. He ended

rather vehemently with the words, "Have faith in me, Miss Gay," which the young lady interrupted, crying out—

"Have faith in you, Mr. Hoggard? Is not faith in priests the doctrine that we Protestants are supposed to protest against?"

Mr. Hoggard glanced up, sorry that she should appear to such disadvantage in asking such a question. Gay had to bear a burden of blushes on her cheeks at feeling herself misunderstood. Her eyes had but the more courage. In point of fact, she usually got the better of Mr. Hoggard in their conversations, her incisive utterance being to him so many thorns in the flesh; but she misunderstood him quite as much as he her. She called him a man of positive faults and negative virtues, so was prepared to show him but little indulgence.

"Faith in me would be considerably better than faith in nothing, Miss Gay." The rector took a turn up and down the room, gravely pondering how he should address in suitable terms this young lady, who was her father over again, both being of the stuff that rebels are made of.

In spite of the solemnity of the moment, Gay bethought herself of a saying of her father's, considered by her mother one of his very naughtiest speeches. "If I define faith as the capacity which I have for persuading myself to believe that which I know to be false, what then, Mr. Hoggard?" A twinkle in her eyes threatened to upset the heels of gravity in her countenance.

This was a shocking speech, considering the occasion; but Miss Westover, as we have seen, was very restive with people who irritated her mental temperament.

Patience is the last acquired of the virtues, and it seemed probable that Miss Westover would have to wait many years before attaining to it.

Mr. Hoggard felt hurt; he was also concerned — painfully puzzled. "Your words savour of heresy;" and he drew himself up with dignity, gazing down into a pair of eyes already of a relenting softness. "From all false doctrines, heresies, and schisms, good Lord, deliver us," he murmured, turning in a sort of extremity to the churchly scrip dear to the heart, surely, of every Episcopalian.

"Good Lord, deliver us," echoed Mrs. Westover, in a low anxious voice, stealing into the room and taking a seat beside her daughter, hoping, praying, that these two had enjoyed a season of comfort together.

The conversation now was shared between Mrs. Westover and the rector.

Much talk about Meade—simple, homely, kindly talk, in which Gay joined now and then, in a softened mood. She was turned penitent, and took pains to let Mr. Hoggard see the change of attitude.

At leave-taking, she gave him her hand, not without warmth, and there were tears in her eyes, at sight of which Mr. Hoggard felt gratified. "That is being like other girls," he thought, noting the moisture on her thick brown eyelashes; "it is the thaw which marks the sun of righteousness." His heart thumped back to his brain.

Mr. Hoggard was what the world calls a well-meaning man—"The worst kind the world has to show," was the colonel's verdict upon the class labelled "well-meaning."

Mrs. Westover no more thought of criticizing him, being her pastor, than she would have thought of criticizing the sun,

the moon, the "Inlet," the Prayer-book. All were from God, she thought; the pastor a living finger pointing out the road to heaven. What gave the mother solace gave the daughter unrest; for to the latter, floating in a buoyant sea of energy, even doubts brought delight. But Mrs. Westover was, to quote the colonel, a pressed flower shut up within the sweet seclusion of the family Bible.

Gay, in the ardour of a fanciful nature, said, "My mother's imagination is a nun, her reason is father-confessor, her heart a cloister wherein she has the visions of the mystic; she is at peace with herself, the world; and yet, sinful as it may sound, I do not believe I would change places with her."

Close to the lady's bedside, on a candle-stand, lay her Bible, "The Imitation of Christ," and her Prayer-book. A ribbon

marked that page in the "Imitation" whereon her mind rested oftenest, headed, "Contempt of Earthly Vanities;" delicate pencilling indicated the text she lived by, "What will avail thee to dispute sublimely, if thou be void of humility? Sublime words assuredly make a man neither holy nor just, but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God. . . . I would rather feel compunction than understand the definition thereof."

CHAPTER II.

MRS. WESTOVER was a simple, old-fashioned dame of the type dear to our hearts, whether we meet with it in fiction or in real life. Hers was not a mind that travelled to pageants, but revelled in home and home-industries, such as her flower-garden, innocently gay as a valentine; her linen-press, strewed with rose-leaves or jessamine blossoms; her pantry, with its ample array of jams, jellies, and German pickles; her hog-killings, with their accompanying bustle: the pickling of feet, the preparing of brains, the making of sausage

and liver-pudding, the rendering of lard —and such lard! there was no lard in the world whiter than Mrs. Westover's. Can you not see it boiling in the cauldron over the open fire in the stone-floored kitchen, Aunt Portwine dashing into it, during the process, a bunch of rosemary twigs, to give the right flavour?

This may be called materialism by the college-bred woman, but it was a refined materialism, seasoned with self-sacrifice, spiced with industry, glorified by wife-and-mother love. There was always a grace about the things that Mrs. Westover did, which gave beauty to the meanest function. Her daughter used to say, "Some day I expect to see a nimbus light on my mother's head. It will descend upon her when she is feeding the chickens, or rolling pills for the servants, or putting up marmalade. It will have to come at such a

time, for she is never idle unless when she is saying her prayers." Of course this was a flippant speech, but daughters will make such speeches now and then; and Miss Westover did not begin to realize that her mother's most keenly intellectual work was done during those long prayers, which she indulged in twice a day in a closed chamber, the door locked, so that even the husband did not intrude; for the good lady was something of a mystic, as has been said, and it was a maxim of hers that "We must have a vision of things heavenly from day to day during our earthly career; we must commune with our Maker, and learn to live with Him and in Him, so that when He takes us to Himself it is a mere completion of the fusion already begun."

And yet, with this inclination to mysticism, Mrs. Westover was no selfish

visionary. "Her life is one prolonged hymn," said the colonel. "A benison upon humanity," said the daughter. "She takes one of the 'Blesseds' for the text of each day's living. Heigh-ho! some one *must* be bad in a household where one of the members is so excessively good as mamma. Which shall it be, father—you or I? We'll have to toss up, won't we?" and the saucy girl would wheel around her father, take him by the neck with her arms, and set a good round kiss on his forehead; for here were the two congenial spirits.

Miss Westover had been bred to industrious habits, but her industry alternated with fits of idleness that swept her with the force of a deluge. She had no record of simple labours like her mother—samplers showing the alphabet worked in crewels, and done at the early age of five;

medallions of white satin oversprinkled with prim nosegays of rose and violet, and inscribed with sentimental phrases in French, such as "Gage d'amitié," "Souvenir dénfance," and the like, in the most fanciful lettering—the triumph of her girlhood's fingers. No, Miss Westover was not dainty, nor sentimental, nor ornamental; she belonged to a different period, and was ambitious of originating, not imitating; she wanted to cast her spirit into some large work that should tell, instead of into pretty pottering; she was willing to be liberal with her heart as well as her mind, her body, if *only* she might accomplish something. "It's my daughter who has the talent for drawing," the colonel once said to a friend. "Why, she painted a picture of my black steer that would have taken you by the neck and shoulders. The girl has more intellect in

her fingers than most people have in their heads."

Mrs. Westover set herself, as her first duty, after the news of Meade's death, the task of writing to Angela.

"Come to us, my dear child," she wrote —"come. You shall be to me as my own daughter."

But the month of August was nearly gone before Angela came. Mrs. Westover meanwhile busied herself with preparation, and in this her heart found solace. The front bed-chamber was got ready, a homely room, but sweet. Two windows let in the scents of the garden, the other two glimpsed the river and the sheep-field. Over the mantle hung a portrait of Meade as a boy, his hand resting on a dog's head. You might have thought it a fancy piece, for the artist had idealized the boyish countenance; and yet,

with wonderful accuracy, he had caught the very expression of the deep-set, mournful grey eyes which characterized the man. In the centre of the room a square of brussels carpet was spread, and this, leaving a superfluity of bare floor, might have looked meagre were it not for the coat of cherry varnish which had been given to the hard wood planks, thereby heightening their complexion to a warm Venetian red.

To-day the new daughter-in-law is expected. Aunt Portwine swept, with her stiff-jointed black hand, faint creases from the pillows of the fourposted bed; shook out the dimity valences, murmuring, "Ef she kyarnt sleep good in dis yere nest, she ain't a'gwine to sleep nowhar;" settled, for the last time, the homely water-bucket; drew in the shutters, with an inarticulate growl at the bits of puff-ball blown in

by the August breezes through the open windows. Thus, stooping with great difficulty as she went along to pick up a stray thread, or to flick away an imaginary atom of dust, she got herself at last out of the room, and closed its door, placing a consecrated hush upon this shrine of cleanliness and order.

The Westovers expected an angel incarnate in the shape of the new daughter-in-law; but we must except Gay, who had her misgivings. She entered the room vacated by Aunt Portwine, carefully shut the door behind her, ensconced herself in the window-seat, pushed a shutter open, and drew from her pocket a small volume, which she began to read. This was Meade Westover's diary. With the tact peculiar to her, Miss Steptoe had reserved this one relic from the dead man's effects, and had sent it to the sister.

There were mainly disconnected jottings-down; some business items, at long intervals, occurred between dates. Gay opened the book listlessly, but her interest quickened, and she interrupted the reading now and again to glance up at the portrait of her brother over the mantel-shelf. How reproachfully the eyes dwelt upon her! She almost felt as if she had no right to penetrate whatsoever secrets he might have shut up within the leaves of the little red-leather book she held, but a certain date attracted her, and she read—

"I met an extraordinary man to-day—Ernest Block. His looks do not belie him. The shock of black hair, coarse like an Indian's, seems to oppress even his square-hewn temples; his skin is rough and of coppery hue; his features are heavy, but they make a grand background

for the smile occasionally breaking over them, and reminding one of a sunbeam in a gorge. I never saw such eyes; they are like two pools of asphalt giving forth a bituminous glower. From them, I should judge that the man's nature is bitter, strenuous, harsh; indeed, I have already discovered that he is quick to resentment, and that it is through the furnace of the passions that his virtues have come out gold."

Another date: "Block and I have nearly quarrelled, chiefly about terms. He said to me, 'Your point of view is good, Westover, but you want more facts. Conclusions follow upon premises; these require knowledge, those wisdom.' I heard him in the evening address his society. It was a plea for a socialism not excluding the growth of each individual on his own behalf. He makes many

references to the Bible. The one which struck me most was Christ's illustration of the corner-stone, which, he says, represents union with regard to order, but without life; the next higher grade was the vine, union having life but no feeling; the next higher, members of one body having feeling but not affection; the most perfect union, and the one that has been a favourite in all ages with the Church, being the Bride and Bridegroom, the highest of all the symbols, because it possesses order, life, feeling, affection, or love. He deplored the low aims of the people, and struck home with strange force. He said, 'What an epicure is the worm, the centre of his world, whose circumference is within the round of the cherry, the chestnut, or the cheese! He is embedded in his appetite, his tomb being his daily bread.' Some one asked him if he approved of

socialism. He said, 'Yes, as far as it goes; but the best minds are strung up to perceive that the machinery of government and every other is insignificant help, the true revolution being from within, for each man must be a law unto himself; but not until we are sane, strong, and simple, then only may we dispense with symbols and have the absolute democracy. Meanwhile'—with one of his saturnine smiles—'you may look upon titles, castles, organizations, socialism, etc., as upon toys for children to play with.'"

Another date: "They call Block and me, 'fellow hobby-horses.'"

Another date: "Ernest Block came home with me. We had supper together in my rooms, he making the tea, and laughing the while over jokes which he cracked as gaily as the squirrel does nuts.

He is abstemious, declining cigars and wine, and accepting only with his tea bread and apples. I asked him his church. He answered, 'The best in every church;' but he was born a Jew and bred a Catholic. Something from each of these, however, seems to stick to him, for he said, 'The Catholics do not believe the Bible infallible, but the Church. Now, the religion of the future will show clearly that the revelation of God to man is in his own soul, and that will be the Bible of the coming age.' I said, 'Do you not live over-much in the coming age?' He shook his head. 'He who looks for perfection must look to the coming age.' Speaking of souls reminds me of an odd adventure. I and my friend Harrison have introduced into Denver the queerest little woman. She is going on the stage."

Another date: "Poor Harrison is in a scrape; I must help him out. The actress is Angela Cloud."

Another date: "Block and I have fairly quarrelled this time. I said to him, 'What must one man do when he sees another plunge into a gulf which will drown him? You admit that he must pull the suicide out once. But then what? Must he hasten away about his business, leaving the wretch unguarded, though knowing that the act will be repeated?' Block tells me that death is a purifier, even destruction, and that they are to be looked upon as medicine. Does not Block's magnificent individualism sometimes descend to a cruel selfishness? If death is a medicine, it is of the absolute sort, which none but God may administer. My heart goes out to Harrison; my mind to Block. This last lacks some of the

qualities that go to the making up of a gentleman. Gentleman! Bah! I did not think to use the word, but somehow it does stick to the Virginian. Block may have been a sinner, but of the sort that unsheaths a persecuting saint ready to tear his friend to pieces for what he calls God's sake. Death may be a calmer of the senses, but it is not death I am thinking of; it is hell. Block does not believe in hell, but in experience. I see it, though, yawn—a black gulf, into which two tremulous feet stagger. Heavens! have I not a sister? Is not womanhood holy? I seized my hat. Block, looking up from the periodical he was reading by the light of my lamp, cried out, 'Westover, you sentimentalist, where are you going?' 'The sentimentalist is going to Angela Cloud's.' Block ground out from between

his teeth the word 'Fool!' and spurned with his hand the magazine, as if it were a living thing. 'So be it,' I replied. 'Fool, if you like; all the same, Block, you have a fool for your friend.' I ran hastily down the staircase, my feet carrying me towards Angela, my thoughts busy with Block. How he digs at the roots of ideas! But his theories are grander than his acts. Somehow he flames a blazing torch over the haziness of life, and his conversation often drives me forward to do the thing he would wish to keep me from doing."

These few pages from her brother's diary gave Gay food for future reflection. But there was now no chance for musing, or even for consulting once again that grave boyish countenance above the mantelpiece, to search for a clue to the

mystery, for up comes the Westover coach, lumbering and dilapidated, to the front door, Hardtimes, a brown-faced Turvey-drop, on the coachman's seat. This coach was to take Miss Westover to the landing, to meet the sister-in-law. This old vehicle was an heirloom, only got out on grand occasions. It had been christened on the day that Mrs. Westover had been married, and it had taken her on her wedding jaunt. Gay, hearing much, when a child, of this famous wedding jaunt, had innocently asked once if the carriage were a buggy then, supposing, of course, that it had grown to its present bulk in the progress of time. After long intervals of rest, it turned out, as now, with an air of assumed juvenility; and Gay stepped into its capacious body with a pre-occupied expression, which her mother attributed to the solemnity of the occa-

sion; but the daughter felt as if she had stood face to face with a ghost, and she shuddered, in spite of the sunshine. Hardtimes shook his reins gently, and the carriage rolled along the gravel road.

As it disappeared behind the trees, Mrs. Westover re-entered the guest-chamber, stirring about gently, and sprinkling last touches upon it, as an author does commas upon his pages. She drew in the shutters again, so that the sun should look with chastened eye upon the young widow, who, in her brief life, had passed through that supreme pang. On the candle-stand she placed a cut-glass dish of flowers. With a certain quaintness of sentiment, she had gathered the lowest-tinted flowers which her borders afforded: mignonette, lavender, white petunias, purple verbenas, and aromatic sprigs of

lemon thyme. Beside the dish she laid a tiny volume, her favourite, "The Imitation of Christ." "This will be a friend to the poor young thing when she first finds herself among strangers, though she shall not feel that we are strangers long."

In Mrs. Westover's hospitable heart there was room for none but friends. "Poor child!" she sighed again. Her eyes wandered to the mantel, and rested on Meade's portrait; her lips moved, and then she fell upon her knees beside the great white bed, and there remained, pouring out her heart in prayer, until wheels, grating again upon the gravel path, warned her that the carriage was returning, and that she must hasten down to meet the woman who was her son's wife.

That summer day upon which Gay had

gone to meet the new sister-in-law she could never forget. The locusts singing out in the languid August air, as she bumped along over roads full of holes; the dense dusty green of August leafage which shut them in for miles, and then occasionally broke away so as to disclose a cornfield or a meadow, sprinkled with the lace-like flower of the wild carrot, and bordered thick with golden rod. There is something half glad, half sad, in an August day, amid the mellow colour and the down-freighted softness of the atmosphere, which tells of flowers gone to seed and fruits long since ripened; there is a feeling of regret; there is, at this season, a chord that tells of departure. One sees the first red leaf, the first yellow one. Decay comes slowly; it comes framed in beauty, and it is only the hypersensuous who are susceptible to the first delicate

steps of its approach. Gay was susceptible to it, and also to the crisp breeze that blew in from the bay, as she approached the landing. "The boat is in," was her first comment, as she rattled down the wharf. "One instant, and we shall be face to face." Who does not remember dreaded meetings? That first hand-clasp with a stranger, who, having been nothing to you, is now to become everything. What a qualm it gives! So did it now. At the words, "Good morning, Miss Westover. Here's a guest for Lady's-Meade," from a countryman at her elbow, Gay started with heightened colour, and found herself fronting a young woman of about her own age, who, under her load of crêpe and Henrietta cloth, looked like a silver-white, full-orbed moon clasped by a jet-black midnight sky.

Startled by the suddenness of the appa-

rition and its fairness, Gay could only stammer faintly, as she threw back her veil, "Is this Angela?" Then, more faintly still, "I am Gay."

In the face of this pink and white visage, this maturity of babyhood, she was strangely embarrassed. What sort of a creature had her brother married? What was become of her dark women? the Geraldines? the Lamias? of her picturing? But questions asked had to be left unanswered, for young Mrs. Westover cried out, making two syllables of the name—

"Ga-ay, please turn so's I can heve a real good look at you. I certinly heve come a long ways, clear acrost the pa-ra-ras, to see you; you'd ought to be good and glad to see me, for I like to have died before I did get yere."

At this salutation Gay turned promptly,

and again fastened her gaze upon the stranger's face. It was a glance of unspoken astonishment, and, for a moment, the two young women looked straight into each other's eyes, Gay with an expression so like Meade's in her own grey orbs, that Angela felt stifled by a vague sense of uneasiness. She pushed back her fluff of forehead curls, and said, rather pettishly—

"Why, you air pritty, real pritty, after all, and I ain't a-going to be 'fraid of you, either."

Miss Westover reddened, and Angela went on—

"I'm awful ti-ired; it's sech a ways to get here—four days. I don't think I'll ever go 'way again, fur I'm *that* ti-ired."

She did not signify what measure of fatigue *that* represented, but a beautiful

teardrop welled up under her eyelid. Her lamentations had in them an element of fascination from their spontaneity. They made you feel beside yourself with sympathy.

Gay would willingly have walked every inch of the way home, if such an operation could have rested this walking and talking doll-baby. But Hardtimes, looking solemnly over the corners of his high starched shirt-collar, was holding wide the carriage door.

"Get in, Angela," whispered Gay; and Angela did get in, clinging to Meade's sister as she did so, and crying out in that mingling of the lisp which is bewitching and the burr which is exasperating—

"Yes; take me to Luddy's-Meade, quick; please do. I'm *that* ti-ired."

The reply was a start forward on the

part of the bay horses; and Hardtimes, sitting on the box immovable as a wooden man, let them choose their own gait now, for well they knew their heads were turned towards the home-barn.

Gay, meanwhile, was occupied with thoughts of a nature far from pleasing. From under her lashes she looked down at her companion. Meade's wife? Was it possible she had ever been his wife, this unthinking mass of pink and whiteness? She recoiled. Forward flew her thoughts to father and mother, who, at home, were straining their ears to catch the sound of the bays' hoofs. They had deified Meade; what would they think of his wife? The truth was, that both Colonel and Mrs. Westover belonged to the old-fashioned school, which is not given to analysis. Their beliefs were founded upon habit or tradition. They accepted people

without criticism, and with a wholeness of soul as rare nowadays as it is refreshing. They believed that the motives of other people were, like their own, pure and simple, and they possessed the innocent quality of being able to shut their eyes to other people's faults. Living as they did, they were free from that most narrowing of qualities—suspicion. They looked upon Meade as a saint, so his wife must in some degree share his sainthood. Gay knew that they were prepared to take the stranger on trust, but she said in a low tone, as they swept up the avenue to the front porch—

"We are at home, Angela; lower your veil."

There were no tears in the widow's eyes; but Gay caught sight of her mother, leaning against the rose vine, weeping, and her father standing close

to the pillar of the portico, his head bowed.

The carriage stopped. Hardtimes jumped down from the box, and threw open the door with a great deal of flourish. He liked ceremony with the instinct of his race, and he had been disappointed that there had not been a grand funeral at Lady's-Meade, with a holiday thrown in for the servants.

As the carriage stopped, Colonel Westover lifted his head, then descended the front steps with a slow and stately tread. At the bottom he paused for an instant, awed by the figure weighed down with its burden of widow's weeds. He forgot his own sorrow in the presence of a grief which, to judge from its Stygian blackness, was more overwhelming even than his own. Very tenderly he bent forwards, and, without being able to

speak, half carried the young creature up the steps and placed her in his wife's arms.

What did Angela do? What did she say? She did the most suitable thing in the world that she could have done. No carefully studied speech could have been half so eloquent. She was hungry, tired, overawed by the new people, by the new atmosphere, so she simply burst into a flood of tears; and these tears procured for her a daughter's place in those kind hearts.

"Poor child! the finger of God has been heavy upon her," Mrs. Westover found voice to say, gathering the labyrinth of crêpe and Henrietta cloth close to her bosom; then, still holding her, she half supported, half led her across the porch into the hall, and up the broad staircase into the bedchamber which had been pre-

pared for her. Negro faces might have been seen peeping from behind doors at the family group, but Angela had not yet lifted her veil.

CHAPTER III.

ANGELA belonged to that class of individuals whom Block thought better out of the world than in it; "for on this side of the grave," he had said, "you had better be bad and strong than weak, weakness being fatal to yourself, and the race you generate, as well as the people you come near, the most unforgivable of sins." He interpreted everything with a ferocious practicality. To him the graces were the self-ennoblers; the fates, self-limiters; the furies, the self-disintegrators; and in this last category he heaped the weak.

Gay discovered this and more from her brother's diary, for she discovered also that her brother did not in this matter agree with his friend. On one page in the small leather-bound volume alluded to, she saw, entered in her brother's bold, cuneiform handwriting, the following quotation: "My fair young girl, none can see thee without delight; but bethink thee so to attune thy soul that it may bring harmony to the soul of thy wedded husband." Towards the end of the rather meagrely written book, she chanced upon this paragraph in the midst of two entries concerning a mine, the Chiquita: "Such women have been called by men, undines; thou seest before thee an undine."

The last two pages contained an inventory of household furniture, with this paragraph at the end: "her pranks may seem very pretty, but to have her at one's

side all day, to hear no word of sense, and to have ever to be on the watch that she does not ruin us by her tricks—would not this, at length, weary the patience of a saint?"

While reading Gay felt wrath-lines deepen in her face; her lips writhed, not with controlled, but suppressed passion; anger came in great whirls; and, like the cyclone, its ebb was in smaller waves, which fretted her body and spirit for several days after the climax. She read the diary through twice, then went to her bureau, into which she locked it with emphatic click. Her grief for her brother sublimed into a kind of anger that he should have so spoiled his life. She felt that she must thoroughly agree with his friend Block. And yet, after the lapse of some days, so perverse is human nature, she found herself planning how it would

be best to carry on the task of development which Meade had begun.

"Poor child! sleep is the best thing for her; she's worn out with grief—you can see that," were words which dropped frequently from Mrs. Westover's lips, as several days passed, and Angela still kept her bed—the bed that had been abundantly prayed over by Madame Westover.

The truth was, the "poor child" of that good woman's imagination was enjoying, not suffering, her physical collapse. So the birds chittered, the river murmured, the insects droned, the live-oak shadows crept backwards and forwards upon the polished floor of the bedroom. Still Angela scarcely stirred.

Three times a day Mrs. Westover tipped into the room, to gaze upon the slumberer, whose round face was half hidden by the

lace border of the pillow-slip, half veiled by her own hair. Once the sleeper moved, displacing as she did so a case with steel clasps pressed against her bosom. "My boy's picture," thought Mrs. Westover, with the guilty feeling of an intruder. An instant's pause, a sigh, wistfulness tugging at her heart-strings, and then Mrs. Westover glided away as softly as she had come. But Mrs. Westover was mistaken; the case with steel clasps did not contain her boy's picture, but a looking-glass, in which Angela delighted to survey herself, holding it first this way, and then that way, catching the light on her hair, so as to make it dance, and the shadow upon her eyes, so as to make them deepen, finding in this occupation an entertainment acceptable to the voluptuary. If she heard a step, she hid the case in the plats of her nightdress or in the folds of the

sheet. But at first she was left much to herself.

Three times a day the laden waiter was carried to her chamber. What an array of good things! Everything was arranged with the house-artist's eye: a piece of old silver; a dish of cut glass, a bit of pink broiled ham; an egg lustrous as feldspar; jelly, shaking and shining with the sparkle of a jewel, this being for the delicately tanned flannel cakes, which in colour were not unlike Aunt Portwine's own cheeks.

"Hee-ah, honey, ole mis', she sez how you mus' eat suffin; de cun'l he shaved off de ha-am, an' Miss Gay, she bilt de aig husself. Come lawng, honey;" and Angela responded to the coaxing music of Aunt Portwine's voice.

When she was alone, you should see how she brought her little pearl-white

teeth to bear upon the bit of ham, how quickly the egg melted, and how promptly the flannel cakes were crushed into nothing by the firm jaw.

But when Aunt Portwine was cooking breakfast for the servants, she gave her criticism upon Angela in parenthesis to Uncle Crutch Amos, who was cleaning crabs on the kitchen steps. "I'se libbed all my life 'mung de quality, an' I knows real live gentlefolks when I sees 'em, I does, thank de Lawd; an' it's my 'pinion dat Marse Meade, he done step out de quality, when he marry young mistus ober yondah. Now, ob co'orse I wouldn't say dis to nubbuddy as wasn't one ob de fam'bly, Amos." Aunt Portwine held in her hand a pewter spoon full of creamy white lard, flourishing it right and left as she pronounced these words.

The featherbeds did their work at last,

and Angela arose from her bath of linen and down, determining to dress and go downstairs. Tired of bed, she waked suddenly to a feeble sort of curiosity as to her surroundings. Dressing, too, afforded excitement. She surveyed with no inconsiderable pleasure the morning gown designed by Miss Steptoe, who had given directions as to how, when, and where it should be worn. She felt a certain pride in this intensity of black which pervaded her wardrobe, perceiving that it imposed respect; it was a symbol of grief, and people do not ordinarily look beyond the symbol to the thing signified; so Angela, in this way, got the credit for being steeped in woe—a beautiful, pathetic, overwhelming woe which took the hearts of the beholders by storm. Of course, she did not make such differentiations as these; but she felt a ridiculous, stupid

little pride in herself and in her clothes, whistling softly while lacing her cashmere waist over its vest of faille, after which she stepped back to get the effect. The oblong mirror only granted a glimpse of the Watteau plait in the back; but the black lisse frilling in the neck gave a dazzling quality to her complexion. The boy Westover looked solemnly down from the mantel, watching her shake out her black-edged handkerchief, and then, as a finishing touch, push open the shutters, and gambol for a moment in the sunshine that poured in generously through the window. A sunbeam smote the picture, and changed its expression from solemn to smiling. It was one of those changes that we often see in the living countenance; and young Meade seemed to be laughing with all his might, exultantly, triumphantly, as who should say, "Look

at her; she is mine, and I gave my life's blood to make a lady of her."

This mock lady opened the door of her room, peeped shyly out, gathered up her train as grandly as a peafowl, and clattered down the staircase in her French-heeled slippers.

At the staircase foot, seated in his arm-chair, sat the colonel. The morning sunshine came into the great wide hall also, but its brightness was tempered and oak-shadowed; there was no glare, only a bronzy brightness given forth by the mellow grain forming the stairs, the panelling, and the bookcases. In the midst of this Rembrandt glory sat the colonel, sunk in a brown study; but he roused with a start at the sound of those French heels, and, looking up, beheld a golden-haired woman standing on the step, gazing at him with wondering eyes, whose

blue was intensified to purple by the black dress.

Beauty affects us like music, seeming to set our natures in a higher key, a brilliant major, and there are in this degenerate world no men so susceptible to its influence as those knights of the old Dominion ; for nowadays men will confess themselves surprised by nothing, but those men, no matter how old, were proud to admit that their bosoms glowed in the presence of a lovely woman. So up sprang our colonel, as lightly as any lad, for he was cheered by the vision. Placing his hand upon his breast, he bowed low to Angela—a gesture so full of respect and homage, that she could no more have dropped into her coarse dialect than she could have flown. She did not will *not* to ; she was simply held aloft, not by her own power, but by

another's; and the words she spoke were inspiration.

At best Angela's language was neither systematically correct nor incorrect; it was not the offspring of intention, but a gipsy creature based upon no rule. Sometimes she astonished her hearers by her plebeianisms; at other times she surprised them by a melodiously articulated word or a superbly modulated phrase; but it was all accident what she said or how she said it.

"Welcome to Lady's-Meade, madam," spake the colonel, not so much with the formal as with the stately tone. "We hope that you will look on this as your home, and the Westovers as your kinsfolk." He waved his arm with a military air.

"Thank you, sir," said Angela, overawed, for she had never seen any-

thing so simply grand, nor so grandly simple.

"Take this chair, madam!" The colonel offered his hand, and, helping her down the bottom step of the staircase, handed her across the waxed floor (as if they two had been stepping a minuet), to a homely rocker in the window-corner, just where a whiff from summer flowers was borne into the hall through the open shutters and the widespread door. "Ole mis sticks to it that there is no such chair in the house for comfort as this; she has rocked her babies to sleep in it." He sighed, thinking of his firstborn, who had been rocked to sleep therein.

"Thank you, sir," was Angela's reply, as she dropped upon the chintz cushions, spread her skirts about her, and lifted the dimple in her chin for the colonel to look at.

The sunbeams travelling in through the window lit up her hair. The colonel was dazzled; he stepped back a pace or two, his eyes fixed upon the blazing beauty of that hair, the amazing softness of that dimple, then allowed himself to sink, almost helpless from astonishment, into his own armchair. An instant of admiring silence followed. "I knew that my boy would choose the right sort of woman for his wife," thought the old gentleman, absorbed with pleased survey of Angela's person.

Surely if there ever had been a girl born in luck that girl was Angela Cloud. In this solemn mansion, chained to the past by two hundred years of tradition, she found herself, and in a new atmosphere. What a contrast to the traditionless West, out of whose bosom she had sprung! There, private judgment laid

down the law; here, conventionality, ancestral custom. The difference in the plane of feeling was as great as in the landscape. There, ranges upon ranges of glaciered mountain, grim, waterless plateaus had met her eye; here, smooth, smiling territory, enclosed by the snake fence, and bordered by bay, creek, river. And yet in her heart of hearts Angela had more affinity for this new land than Gay, who had been born here.

Not so Gay, she had the courage to be original, and it must be admitted that this courage made her a little harsh. She now took upon herself the task of screening the new daughter-in-law's vulgarity and stupidity from father and mother; but her patience was often sorely tried; rising in the morning, strenuous to shield or to guide, as the case might be; going to bed

at night in a state of moral goose-flesh from the effort made. Oh, this arming of one's self *cap-à-pie* to resist rubs from the friction of temperament! Grief for her brother had changed into anger, now anger was changing into sympathy. Her father and mother, good easy people, fell into the innocent trap she set for them. The colonel's reverence for womanhood and wifehood, Mrs. Westover's vision of the divine, threw either the veil of romance or of mysticism over their eyes, so that they perceived nothing in the little creature saving her pathos, and her dulness which they construed to mean grief. Angela did not refer to her past, silence upon this point having been enjoined upon her by Harrison and Fanny Steptoe at parting; she therefore did the best thing which, under the circumstances, she could have done—that was to keep

silent, and this silence was attributed to sorrow.

"She cannot speak of our beloved Meade yet; the shock was too cruel," Mrs. Westover whispered in the darkened parlour to neighbours who dropped in for a glimpse of this beau-ideal of a mourning bride.

She said so little, and her black looked so distractingly black against the white of her skin, that many went away with a tear or two in their eyes. They had heard that she owned an entire mine, and they went away to circulate in the county more and more exaggerated reports concerning her wealth. A Western heiress, they said; the daughter of a cattle prince, said some; others, of a railroad king; but what difference did it make? Aunt Portwine had told that the widow's underclothes were trimmed—a finger deep, said

some; a quarter of a yard deep, said others—with Irish point. "And I knows pint when I sees it, that I does," insisted Aunt Portwine.

Poor Angela! she was placed on a pedestal, where she had to sit, whether she would or not; custom bound her with its myriad invisible threads, and she had no strength to cut the Gordian knot. It was a life of desolate dignity, for even the kindness of uncongenial people oppresses. Angela was one of the women who are franker with the other than with her own sex. Who should she talk to? Gay walked about with a book in her hand. The colonel's stately bow frightened her. When she approached Mrs. Westover, that good lady would immediately begin to speak about heaven, as if it were the next farm; about God as if He were the neighbouring planter. A solemn silence

pervaded the house, and in the parlour the piano-lid was never raised; she dared not break that house's grief-stricken silence with her voice, but had to keep it a caged creature within her breast, struggling for freedom.

One morning she took fate in her own hands, and went in search of freedom. August had fledged tree, shrub, and grass with beautiful vegetable down which gave a furry softness to the lawn, while Mrs. Westover's parterres had burst into a loud laugh of scarlet geraniums. Angela took a grassy path leading to the Wash-woods, so called, because on its south side the inlet was constantly sucking the soil from the tree-roots, so that many of them showed, along the line of the beach, bare coils of root-fibre clinging to the memory of what once had been good foundation land. Many growing things

were gone to seed, and berries were appearing; the tall grass spires were powdered with lilac-hued pollen; some were beaded with wine-coloured seed-vessels; others were bristling with long green whiskers. The wild carrot made heavy white embroidery in the encompassing meadow, and the ripe purple clovers still clustered in rich pompons. Angela pulled grass blades which swung toward her in the pathway as she walked, biting, tasting, throwing away, for she liked to keep her teeth busy in lieu of ideas. The Wash-woods showed that beautiful and subtle diffusion of sun and shade, that perfection of forest sifting peculiar to a summer morning generous with its gold. Angela, however, cared little or nothing for the halo about the trees, which vibrated so gently in the breeze that they seemed not so much to

be whispering as to be saying one prolonged "Hush!" on a falling slide to each other. Beauty strikes different senses in different beholders, sight, hearing, feeling; only in the poet, perhaps, does it strike them all as a unit presenting to his soul the vision of truth, in its beauty as well as its goodness. Angela was susceptible to sound; those rustlings of grass-blades, blending their notes in sequence like a scale, those tremolos of the tree-boughs, took her thoughts from herself. Stopping and leaning with clasped arms around a beech tree, she breathed forth a few faint human notes first, then let her whole voice loose.

Presently an audience offered in the shape of a turkey gobbler, followed by a large progeny, all awkward, ineffectual imitations of himself. The turkey gobbler was doing the majestic in a way that

humorously parodied many a dowager seen at the opera. He craned his head, threw it back so as to show off the great scarlet jabot at his throat, and got his great body, with a deal of fussing and gobbling, through the undergrowth that formed a barrier between the wood and the avenue. "Gobble! Gobble!" began the turkey, making its way into the wood, followed assiduously by all the members of his family; and "Gobble, Gob-ble!" sang out Angela in return, unclasping her arms from the beech, and lifting her dress on either side with her hands. The turkey was provoked at finding his song appropriated by another biped than himself; so he began to gobble angrily, and to strut about, all fuss and feathers. Angela danced backward and forward to him, entertained by this barn-door drama, singing louder and louder, as

he grew more irritated. "I thee more than turkkies love!" The duet of "Gob-ble, gob-ble!" very melodiously lilted by one of the singers, made noise enough to drown all other sounds, so that Angela did not hear the creak of the front gate, nor the grating of the buggy wheels that now rolled forward and paused on the road under the wide swinging branches of some beech trees. She was seen before she had time to perceive the addition made to her audience, in the person of the Reverend Philip Hoggard.

"Can I believe my eyes? Let's have a good look. Upon my word and honour, it is the young widow, and no two ways about it! What a voice! Wasn't she made for a church choir? and such a gold crown on her head! Well, luck's in the Lord. I'll have a little talk with her;

right here is as good as any place. Maybe she'll give us a new lectern; the present one is too shabby for—for——"

The end of his reflection was reserved for the inner sanctum of Mr. Hoggard's mind, which we may not penetrate. He settled himself comfortably in his buggy and preluded a cough.

Angela, hearing this sound so near her, turned suddenly, and took the Rector of Evelynton captive on the spot with a smile. The Reverend Philip responded to the point of almost dislocating his jaw, and quite forgot about Evelynton in the superior charms of woman.

"Ah! good morning, Mrs. Westover. Glad to have a chance of seeing you alone for a few minutes."

Angela did not look displeased by this speech; but dropped her head on one side and repeated her smile. Coquetry

was to her nothing more than a rudimentary instinct such as we see in birds, children, and young animals; the challenging glance, the sparkling speech, were unknown to her. As for Hoggard, there were in him all those inequalities of education which give the death-blow to culture; and he was both ignorant and arrogant.

"I've been wanting to beg you to begin attending church, Mrs. Westover. That'll be the only thing to give you any solid comfort, you know."

The rector forgot that young Mrs. Westover seemed to have been taking a good deal of solid comfort some minutes back, when he had caught her singing the turkey song from the "Mascot," but he thought it best to ignore that.

"I should like to, but they won't let me; they say it's too soon."

She thought of the Australian crêpe, two dollars and a half a yard, that had not yet seen the light of a Virginia day. She was under the ban of restriction, and its rigidity strung her up to a sort of saddened perplexity, for in Werewocomico, as in other conventional places, grief had its calendar. For so many moons the veil was kept down; on a certain day, which etiquette has decided, it may be thrown sidewise; on another lifted, and, if the deceased is not too near a relative, it may be thrown back permanently.

"They won't let you? Ah, yes, I understand. Natural, very, you know" —such a near relation, he was about to add, but coughed the words away as unsuitable. "Customs vary — yes, of course they do, with the place; but you are in the right to be in a hurry to get to church—yes, decidedly in the right.

Piety, zeal—lovely things. Suppose—suppose I talk with Mrs. Westover, your mother-in-law, you know; perhaps we could bring her around to see it as we do. Shall I?"

"Oh, would you, Mr. Hoggard? Now, don't go back on me, for they're a solemncholy lot up at the house"—she made a movement in the direction of the house with her thumb.

Mr. Hoggard had a coaxing tone that she liked, calling it sympathy. Her vision being bounded by her own experience, she was ready to monopolize sympathy, thinking that the whole world owed her a debt of it. Mr. Hoggard drew down his mouth didactically at the word "solemncholy," but his thick lips frisked upwards to a smile, as he said to himself, "Ah! but she's a confiding little puss. A man can understand her, somehow, better than

your dignified young woman." Not only do nations use different languages, but spirits of the same nationality, and this is the foundation of quarrels and combats. What one calls chivalry another denominates insincerity or licentiousness. Dignity to one is stiffness to another; charity, indulgence; purity, mere decency; those who stand upon the plain see a diminished horizon.

"Such a voice as you have, Mrs. Westover! I heard you singing when I came up. Have you ever sung in a choir?"

"No; but I know lots of tunes. I can sing 'mos' anything."

"This is a find, I'll declare." Mr. Hoggard thought of his own baritone, and added, "We must try our vocal powers in unison, eh?"

His mind worked upon hymns. Not

so Angela's; the thought of a song slid through her brain and leaped from her lips before the rector knew what she was about. "Tirra-lirra" went the Mexican ditty, in vilely pronounced Spanish, as she had sung it under the orange-trees of Loretto, or before the footlights of the Denver opera-house. The Mexican ditty floated into a street song, broad enough to startle the rector, who was for straightening himself up with a didactic wave of the hand. Then he remembered Evelynton, its chancel and church windows, and that he must sacrifice his feelings for the sake of ecclesiastical woodwork and painted glass; besides which, it really was interesting to watch her. She pushed back her garden-hat, keeping time to a saucy air, raised one hand to her lips as if to hold a cigarette, at which she puffed throughout the song, flavouring the movement with

a delicate perfume of rakishness. Hoggard had not time to be scandalized; he was too much entertained. He forgot to be cautious, and Angela to keep her voice on the low key. Behold it was soaring skyward, like the lark's on a May morning.

As ill luck would have it, who should come along at this moment but Miss Westover herself. She ran across the lawn, down the carriage way, around the abrupt bend in the road, and there stopped, amazed at the sight of Angela singing herself red, while the Rev. Mr. Hoggard sat in his buggy, his leg thrown carelessly over the dashboard, his hat tilted, applauding. She felt sure he was applauding; anyhow, he was laughing, and—— But there was no more laughing when Gay's figure was seen advancing through the beeches. Mr. Hoggard straightened himself up until you

would have thought he could never unbend again without breaking. Each smiling muscle was wiped out of his face, perspiration started at every pore, and he was for gathering up his reins with clerical zeal after this brief holiday.

It was the change in his countenance which first apprised Angela that stolen sweets become bitter when discovered. She turned in the direction of Mr. Hoggard's eyes, herself red and panting, and saw Gay. Now, Angela was afraid of Gay, but her muscles relaxed instead of stiffening as Mr. Hoggard's had done under the effect of surprise; and there was an interval of silence, for no one had anything prepared which was quite suitable to say. It was an uncomfortable pause. Mr. Hoggard felt that he had been unclerical; Gay was shocked by the sudden familiarity which seemed to have started

between them; while Angela felt that she had been naughty, and that she was going to be scolded. She put up her mouth with a pout, intended as an apology.

"Mr. Wustover liked this song." This was her first allusion to her husband. "They uster encore it when I'd be pla——"

But before this last word could be articulated which would shame the conventionalities of F.F.V.-dom, Gay, quick as thought, sprang forward, and laid her hand upon that tell-tale mouth, thus keeping back the revelation which its owner was, alas! on the verge of making. Mr. Hoggard would have been surprised by the suddenness of this act had he not been too self-absorbed; and Gay's next words, thrown in hurriedly to relieve the awkwardness of their situation, gave him the

opportunity of putting an end to his embarrassment by driving on toward the house, very glad to get himself under her mother's mild dominion. Mrs. Westover, unconscious of the scene just enacted, met him at the parlour door with her usual warmth.

"Come in, Mr. Hoggard," she said. "I have something on my mind that I want to talk with you about. It is with reference to our dear Angela. She is not a communicant of the Church; and although I have approached this subject with her, she has been too crushed with grief, poor child, to speak freely with me, so I want you as her pastor to talk with her, and pray with her, and point to her that through the Church alone lies the road to heaven and eternal happiness."

Mr. Hoggard straightened himself before answering. "I have been talking with

her, madam. I was talking to her about this very subject when Miss Gay came upon us just now in the carriage drive. Mrs. Westover opened her heart to me quite freely, and expressed a desire to begin attendance upon Divine service again, wherein alone she finds true comfort. I was just saying to her that I would make this desire known to you, when Miss Gay came up."

Mr. Hoggard did not consider himself bound to explain that this pastoral visit had been enlivened by secular music, and that he had conducted the conference with hat tilted back, and leg thrown over the dash-board of his buggy, relaxed from those stringencies of etiquette which we associate with serious conversation between serious men and women. True, the widow had appeared to him rather fly-up-the-creek. He admitted this to himself

in the seclusion of the drawing-room of Lady's-Meade, and under the chastening influence of its mistress's silver-sprinkled hair.

Obliviousness of a dead husband's memory does not, however, strike other men as a mortal offence. To the Rev. Philip Hoggard it was venial. There was but one woman he could not pardon, and that was the woman who tried to look him through.

"She"—meaning young Mrs. Westover—"is a lovely creature; a lamb of the fold!" was Mr. Hoggard's applause; for, like many other people, he was a little mixed about a lovely face and lovely character, and was apt to substitute one for the other.

Then followed talk about the bishop's visit and confirmation.

When Angela entered the house, Mrs.

Westover drew her gently into the parlour, made her sit down on the sofa, and held her hand, while she said—

"Mr. Hoggard has been telling me, my dear, that you are anxious to make your peace with your Master, and take up your abode in God's house. It is a great comfort to me to hear this; and we cannot be sufficiently grateful for such a blessing."

The good lady strained the girl to her heart, and lifted her eyes, with a look of rapture in them. She thought the flush on her daughter-in-law's face was from zeal, and that the girl's silence proceeded from consecrated feeling. Like Mr. Hoggard, she was cherishing an Angela of her own creating. As for Angela herself, she did not quite understand what all this solemnity and demonstration meant. She had no time for dissent.

Thoughts were formed for her, and words coined.

Mr. Hoggard, at Mrs. Westover's request, knelt down and prayed most oratorically, with his hand on the pretty widow's head. She realized that something was adding greatly to her self-importance, and felt vaguely interested.

In the course of time her sluggish mind roused to the consciousness that she had a reputation to keep up, and that this reputation brought into her life comforts which she would not willingly dispense with, and her flabby nature was bolstered up, until it gained a quality almost like dignity. How Harrison would have laughed to see the foolish little *prima donna* converted into a foolish little churchwoman. She had been translated into F. F. V.-dom, and its aroma was in her garments; but her folly clung to her yet,

strongest of all, although there were blinded eyes who could not, or rather would not, perceive it, for the law was gone forth that she was to be as one of them.

CHAPTER IV.

WRITERS have sung the pleasures of the imagination. Let them rather sing the pleasures of Reason. Imagination is a tropic day, which, in continuity, enervates; it may produce a shining hour, but reaction follows in electric shocks to the spirit: Reason gives the temperate glow in possession of an equilibrium without reactions. May it continue on, the mind's climate, blessed climate, recalling those Elysian spots upon the earth's round, where the atmosphere is for ever equable, where autumn's freshness is wedded to spring's mildness, where winter's sparkle

is harmonized with summer's softness; no extremes, no changes;—such is the climate which Reason generates in the soul; but who has been lifted into the sphere blessed with this heavenly atmosphere?

Not Gay, in whom were the inequalities of an intense nature. The cleverest of the Brodnax boys had once said to his mother—

"Gay Westover rides a high horse and gallops with him."

"Take her down, Hal."

"I, mother? No; I might take off her spurs, perhaps, but I'd leave the whip in her hands—yes, I think I'd leave that."

Nor had Angela been lifted to the serenity of this empyrean, though her dulness might often be mistaken for it by those who had fastened the intellectual bandage over their eyes. Faults frequently masquerade as virtues; revenge wears

sometimes the weeds of justice; innocence, those of virtue; indolence, those of amiability; dulness, of dignity; the faults of the successful are handled as if they were virtues; the virtues of the unsuccessful as if they were flaws; so blinded with glamour are the eyes of human judges.

Around young Mrs. Westover hung an aureole veined with the transcendent glory of sainthood, because of those few months of union with the dead Meade. She was his relict; this consecrated her. Her roughnesses were set down by a kindly neighbourhood as Westernisms, suitable—so thought the provincial mind—as the foreign accent to the foreigner. That she was well-to-do, too, was not without its influence upon outsiders.

"It goes straight to my heart when I hear that wild little tongue of hers," said Mrs. Wormley, the trumpeter of Angela's

wealth through the county. "Those *r*'s make you feel as if the rocks were talking—they split harmony to pieces; but when you look at that black gown, and that innocent-looking face, you forget grammar and such things; besides, did you know that she is worth?—let me see——" A fabulous sum was mentioned under her breath; and Mrs. Wormley, delighting to see people stretch their eyes, talked east and west, and north and south, from Throg's Neck to the Inlet, coining fairy tales in which Angela played the part of princess, dazzling the minds of her new acquaintance, and turning their judgment giddy.

Mrs. Westover was as faithful a worshipper as any at her daughter-in-law's shrine; her impulse taking its rise in ancestor-worship, she idealized every man, woman, and child who bore the name of

Westover. As we have seen, she was occupied, not with ethics, but with religion; not with mind, but with grace; not with nature, but with custom; so she bent a willing knee to self-imposed law.

With the colonel, Angela's plea lay in helpless womanhood. Her crêpe-freighted gowns, insignia of woe, struck awe into his soul; less circumscribed than his wife, he was still under the influence of certain traditions. He repressed all tendency to joke in her presence for several months, and restrained himself valiantly in the way of wit and epigram. It was well he did, for she would not have understood him—a bitter disappointment to a man accustomed to having every joke laughed at, for a period of thirty years, by the most patient and admiring of wives. Cut off in this direction, he indulged himself in the lavishment of the most delicate

attentions upon the little woman, whom he endowed with ready-made virtues to match her beauty. With what an air he handed her in and out the family coach, ending up with a stately bow! With what eagerness he searched the madam's rose-bushes of an autumn morning for a bud, bringing it to the breakfast-room, and laying it on the table beside the widow's plate; always a white rose, of course, for the colonel, being a man of sentiment, spared the bush if its blossoms wore joy's colours! With what a jubilant gentleness he quoted, for her benefit, lines from Horace, Young, Pope, Byron, maybe Lovelace, perfumed with compliments to the fair! while she, taking a childish delight in the swish of a trailing gown at her heels, or in the tinkling of "ear-bobs" at her cheek, would look up, comprehending only that he intended to be kind, and

blush, smiling in his face—a smile that was the living image of intelligence. When you have the weapons for smiling, dimples and all complete, how can you help but give forth what one would swear was more than a semblance? Certain it is that age was taken in, and the twain were content, one with giving, the other with receiving.

The colonel did not care for clever women; motherhood he thought the chief duty of a woman's life, and he invested this function with all that dignity the man gives who himself has been a proud and happy father. His only criticism of Gay was that she had yielded overmuch to the restlessness and stir of the renaissance epoch in the south; that she was not satisfied with the example set by grandmothers who had been charming talkers, writers of vivacious journals and

pretty letters, graceful hostesses, bountiful providers, fruitful matrons; but that she desired to make her activities felt in a broader sphere. She murmured against the beatification of instinct, and this made her kinspeople criticize her often as a rebel against nature. "Nature will never guide us to heaven," she was wont to say in opposition. Her father objected, though in a relenting way, to her plans for study, achievement, and reform.

"I don't know where my children got their thundering, hard-headed wills from. They must be doing something different from their forefathers, who did a hundred per cent. better than any of the people I see around me in these days;" and the colonel, the most delightfully hard-headed, self-willed old gentleman himself that ever stroked a white beard, would take an admiring survey of the daughter he

criticized, always ending the stricture with some such words of praise as the following: "But you've a glorious turn for drawing and painting, Gay; no two ways about that. I like to see you decorating the parlour, doing your mother's profile—worth fifty Madonnas—or the Soldier's Oak, or the new chestnut mare; but I don't see why you want to go to that Sodom and Gomorrah they call New York, and paint a pile of things that no one cares a button for."

Gay, it can well be imagined, was not convinced by such arguments as these. She had restored, to her father's delight, several of the heirloom portraits of their ancestors, a word which Angela persisted in pronouncing an*si*sters, having some vague idea that the word "sister" generalized all the differentiations of pedigree; and now the youthful artist was

trying her powers upon a portrait of young Mrs. Westover, intended as a birthday gift to the colonel. The panel in the parlour most favourable for light was selected as the suitable place for the picture when finished, now an oval canvas throwing out from a dark background a blond face turned full upon the beholder, like that of Lady Betty Claypole over the parlour mantelpiece, done by the flatterer of women, Sir Godfrey Kneller.

There had already been many sittings, and Angela was a patient model, obeying her portrait-taker with a spaniel's docility.

"Come," said Gay one morning, as they sat in the room they called her studio, "we must take a long step forward to-day in your portrait. That's it; sit in front of the dark curtain—so; so. Stop, let me

find a scarf with which to tone down the harshness of your dress."

She fetched quickly a pale blue scarf of the chill tint one sees in pottery, and threw it around the model's shoulders. Severities are easily softened where the human lines melt into frequent curves. That pale blue scarf gave just the spirituality to Angela's colouring which the artist longs for; her carnations and cerulians took wings and flew away from earthly sensuality into a heaven of clear but delicate tint.

Gay sat down before her easel satisfied, but did not continue so long; there was something distractingly difficult about the facile curves she strove to copy.

"You did not get the dimple in. I guess it's hard; but I wish you could. Somebody told me once that there was many a woman who would give five

hundred dollars for the dimple in my left cheek."

The speaker opened her eyes in luminous surprise at her picture, which smiled back its dimpleless smile.

Gay looked at the indentations breaking into the round of her model's cheek, with a feeling half irritation, half admiration, took up her brush, and touched the hair upon her canvas with chrome.

"What heaps and piles of photos I've had taken!" Angela drew a tress of hair across her bosom, and looked at it meditatively. "One wuz of me profile—some liked that best; one wuz with my hair down, but blown back-like from the face—some said that wuz prettiest; one wuz low neck and fillies on the head, and nothing on the ar-rms; they called it Ann Tiggony" (mentally spelled)—"at least, an ar-rtist did, who liked it so much that

he bought ever so many of them taken all kind of ways. I don't know why he wanted to change the name, though. I don't think as much of Ann Tiggony for a name as Angela Cloud. Do you?"

Angela had the monotonous voice of a child, or one who has no experience in feeling. She talked like one who recites a lesson. Ann Tiggony! What answer could be made to such a speech? Gay had none ready. She continued to paint seriously, thinking with pain of her brother—how he had thrown himself away in this marriage.

Gay was a curious mixture; æstheticism in her blended with ethical feeling, making her often seem inharmonious to those unable to penetrate beneath the surface. Æstheticism is so often interchangeable with romanticism or heathen-

ism, that we see many splendid souls falter, turn aside from the worship of truth, and kneel down, instead, to adore beauty, and beauty alone, but Gay was kept from this by a sensitive conscience. In the midst of her reflections broke Angela's prolixity.

"The stor-r-e windows in Denver used to be full of my pictures." She hummed a bar of sweetest music, playing an accompaniment with white fingers upon her Henrietta-cloth lap. "Mr. Westover took them out, though, after we were married." She nibbled the bunched ends of her hair; then shook them out into a streak of sunshine, crossing her diagonally. "Je-mi-ma, they used to make piles of fuss over my hair. If I had as many dollars as I've given away hanks of it!"

"Don't say Jemi-ma," urged Gay, in a tone and with a look so like Meade West-

over's very own, that Angela started and flushed, crying out—

"I forgot, Gaysie; I know I oughtn't to hev said that; but you don't guess how hard it is to be perticklar. Mr. Westover used to say I mustn't talk slang; but I don't see why not, if you want to. Why can't people do what they want to?"

Here was a plea for the liberty which Angela vaguely desired, but for which she was not prepared. She went on talking, watching Gay the while with interest, as the latter worked upon the hair in the portrait, graduating her shades with infinite delicacy. Finally, she cried out—

"Isn't that red your're putting on? My hair isn't red, Ga-ay." Seeing, after the lapse of a few minutes, that the dash of lake burned almost imperceptibly into a tress lying in shadow, she added, with

the note of satisfaction, "That's right. Go it, boots; you've got the swing of my hair. I won't say anything next time, no, not even if I see you putting a smear of blue in the middle of my cheek."

She broke into good-humoured laughter, very agreeable to hear, for her crudities had often the effect of an epigram.

"You are as bright as a dollar, Gay. I wisht I wuz smar-rt like you."

"Keep your head turned this way, Angela," admonished Gay.

"But if I wuz to choose betweenst smar-rt, like you, and pretty, like me, I b'lieve I'd choose pretty."

Angela's primitive thinking took the shape of thought-pictures more than thought-sequences.

"Then you are content, Angela—happy? Few can say that. Were you satisfied

when married to my brother? You certainly were most unlike."

Gay, under the stress of melancholy curiosity, laid down her brush for a moment, and turned an intent gaze upon Angela, making her quiver a little. Those grey eyes, shining, clear, grave, were the mates of Meade's, and they stirred uneasy memories in young Mrs. Westover's heart.

"Did my brother ever let you go on the stage after your marriage, Angela?"

"No, sir-r; he was set against that. But how, in the name of Ju-*pe*ter, did you get hold of this, Gay? I promised Fanny Steptoe, on my sacred word and honour, I'd never breathe it to a soul out here. She said they wouldn't like to think I'd been a primma-domini; but I don't know why, I'm sure. You all love to hear me sing; and, you bet, I've disimproved since I've been in Virgin-y-a."

"Oh, Angela, don't say 'sir-r' to me; I'm not a man." Gay laughed in spite of vexation. "And don't say 'disimproved,' child. How shall I ever get you to let roses and diamonds fall out of your mouth, instead of toads, like the girl in the fairy-tale, you remember? No? Well, at any rate, I knew that you were an actress when my brother married you; but my father and mother must not know. They have strict ideas about the stage. They think it an ante-chamber leading to hell." (Angela stretched her eyes to the widest. She could not see the connection.) "This must continue a secret, which I will help you to keep. Then you lived quietly after your marriage? My brother was never fond of society."

Gay worked burnt sienna into the sketchy hair of her picture; then pushed

back her chair, with head on one side, to get the effect.

"You've hit it in the bull's-eye, Gay"—referring to the question. "He wouldn't let me have anything to do with a single one of them."

"Who? The actors?"

"Yes; the actors, and Senator Dowlie. It was a little taut for me; but, after all, I did not mind much. Mr. Westover wuz the best of the whole lot. He wuz good and kind to me. I set more store on his little finger than on Senator Dowlie, carriages, horses, and all."

"Who was Senator Dowlie? I never heard of him before."

"He wuz the richest man in Denver-r."

"Did you know him well? or was he only an acquaintance, Angela?"

"Jim Riley—that wuz the tenor, you

know—knew Dowlie all to pieces, and said he wuz a man worth counting among your friends, because he would hire a private solar system for any one he liked. Riley used to say 'cute things. And his voice, Gay, wuz as soft and as sweet as—as—a ripe pear."

"But Dowlie, Angela? What good could his money do *you*, unless you married him? Did you ever think of that?"

"Why, he wuz married already," was the reply, given with a brevity intended to settle that question at once.

"Then, you had nothing to do with him, of course."

Angela shrugged carelessly, and settled herself into a lounging attitude. Gay was chiefly occupied just now with massing her questions in a way that would have been cruel, had not Angela presented

to her the wall of dulness, baffling and monotonous, like a great blank wall which, encountered suddenly by a traveller, cannot be scaled, knocked down, nor evaded.

"I did not want to; I didn't care about him. He wuz old enough to be my father, and smelled of tobacco, and had a hugeous wart on the side of his nose—right here." She touched the side of her own nose under its delicately rippling line, to aid the picture of Senator Dowlie's disfigurement. "He gave me some awfully nice presents, though—a poodle, a sweet little fellow; but Mr. Wustover made me send them all back. Dowlie used to bet on my encores"—some of Angela's words were pronounced with infinite care; encore was one—"he sent me gorgeous bo-kays, *this* big"—indicating by a sweep of her dimpled hands—"roses of every colour;

he said I wuz all but like a rose myself. As if a girl and rose could be alike!" She gave a low gurgling laugh to show disdain of the comparison. "Now, a bird would have come up to the notch much better, for a bird can sing. If it hadn't been for Mr. Wustover, Dowlie would have given me a pair-rot. It couldn't help but be nice, you know"—coaxingly—"to be able to count on somebody's sending you floral awf-rings every time you sang, and making a fuss over you. Lillehammer always will have it that it wuz Dowlie made me a success." Meade Westover was the only man who received from Angela's charming lips the title "Mr:" other names went handleless; for him the bud of reverence faintly swelled.

Looking downward at the scarf-fringes, which she plaited and unplaited contemplatively, she did not perceive repulsion in

Gay's countenance—a repulsion showing darkly against reddening cheek and intensely sparkling eyes. In a low constrained voice, Gay asked at last—

"And my brother stepped in between you and Senator Dowlie?"

"Yes, just so. Says he, 'Yonder lies the door, Senator Dowlie; you've only to walk out of it, and not to come back any more.' But I didn't care"—another shrug—"it wuz the candle by the side of the sun. You can blow out the candle when the sun is shining. It wuzn't me, but the theatre people that wuz so crazy after Dowlie; they said he wuz a draw—a first-class catch, you know."

"Was there a quarrel, Angela?" Gay's voice, thrilling on this question, trembled at a possible revelation.

"Oh no; he only told Dowlie to go away, and keep away. I wuz frightened;

you can bet on that. I clung to Mr. Wustover, and he said he would take care of me. Then you should have heard Dowlie laugh—a hid-yus laugh. I can hear it now." Angela thrust two fingers into each ear, and a white shudder ran across her whole countenance, like the break of mist over the sky when the atmosphere is changing. This was the first questioning of Angela concerning her past life, and Gay's ears were strained for each word. "Mr. Wustover up and asked me to marry him on the spot. That wuz the last I saw of Dowlie, and I wuzn't sorry to see the back of his coat as he paddled out of the room. He wuz nothing to me; but Mr. Wustover wuz the man that could hold his head high enough to brush the stars. He helped me all along. You know, I wuz a widder when I married him."

"A widow! Good heavens, Angela, were you married before that? Have you been married twice already?" Gay sprang up, horrified. It seemed as if her sister-in-law's life had been a series of mistakes, reaching, like a great chain, back as far as you might seek, and binding all who had ever been in contact with her in its coils. True it is the weak have very nearly as much influence in this world as the strong.

There was something in Gay's accusing glance as she stood erect, fronting Angela, which made the latter cry out in a kind of piteous appeal for indulgence.

"Don't look hard at me, Gaysie. Bobby Prentiss, the one I married first, wuz a dangerous man—a roofian, a rapscallion to the backbone. Oh, you would have been heart-sorry for me if you had been there. It wuz your brother, Mr. Wust-

over, as helped me to get away from him with my life. Ah, that wuz a happy day when I met him! If it hadn't been for Mr. Wustover, where do you think I would be now?"

Where indeed? Gay could not answer. Angela, with drooped head, fell to a kneeling posture at Gay's feet, and seized hold of the girl's dress.

"Don't be hard on me, Gay; don't be hard on me," she repeated several times beseechingly, and lifted eyes overflowing with tears. Gay was obliged to stoop in order to place her two hands upon the suppliant's shoulders. According to the ideas of justice, she felt that she could hardly forgive this woman who had taken advantage of such splendid generosity. It was not justice, but mercy, for which Angela sued. She felt as never before the poverty of her nature as she crept

nearer and nearer to Meade's sister, a beggar for tenderness.

"Oh, Angela, Angela, Meade was the slave of his conscience. I knew that he had made a sacrifice, but I did not know how great nor under what circumstances. It comes to me at this moment, in a flash; it takes away my breath."

"What is it comes to you in a flash? What is it takes away your breath?" Angela now rose to her feet also, strung up to a high pitch for her, and on the alert to catch the meaning of words which implied much more in her disfavour than she was willing to admit; though her feelings about herself were vague.

"You were married. How soon after my brother spoke?"

"At once; that is, next day." A simple answer, simply given.

"And the reason for such haste was?"

"Mr. Wustover said that if we were to be married, it must be at oncet. He said that I was not safe alone, and——"

Gay stepped back a pace or two with a spirited movement peculiar to her, her voice expressing reproach sharpening up to scorn.

"You know very well that you are not the woman my brother would have chosen as his wife—for love's sake."

Angela stood immovable, a statue of beautiful negation, the full meaning of the words not yet penetrating her mind. Gay continued still more scornfully—

"Because he saw you were not fit to stand alone, he married you. Is not that true? He became your protector, guardian, everything to you. Is not that true?"

"Yes, a million times true." Young Mrs. Westover drew up her figure almost as proudly as Gay; a very pretty reflection

it was of the Westover pride, showing that she had not borne that name in vain. Something awaked in her bosom, sending rose flushes to her cheeks, as she cried out almost as hotly and grandly as her sister-in-law could have done, "Yes, he was all that, and more too, but I *am* the woman your brother chose for his wife, and he—he—loved me."

This dramatic defence of herself so astonished Gay that she remained speechless for several minutes, discovering that the obtusest woman in the world has sometimes granted to her clear vision, and that even she is quick to resent aspersions on the trueness of her wifehood. And so the two young women stood gazing into each other's eyes, when of a sudden the chamber-door opened, and in walked Mrs. Westover. Gay had a spot like a drop of red sealing-wax on either cheek; the

widow, tears in her lovely eyes, and a sky-blue scarf wound about her fantastically.

Mrs. Westover took for granted that this picturesque disorder was the necessary accompaniment of her daughter's art work, so she said innocently—

"What have you been talking about, my dears? I knocked, but no one said 'Come in,' so I had to enter uninvited. Angela, you look flushed; I am afraid that Gay has kept you sitting too long."

Who can remain strung up to concert pitch for more than five minutes at a time? Not Angela; already she was subsiding from the dramatic and lapsing into reactionary incautiousness.

"We were talking about Denver and the times when I was an ac—— "

But before Angela could force sufficient breath through her teeth for the articulating of that fatal *t*, Gay leaped forward, bent

down her head, and pressed her lips to her sister-in-law's, smothering the all-but-pronounced word in a resounding kiss.

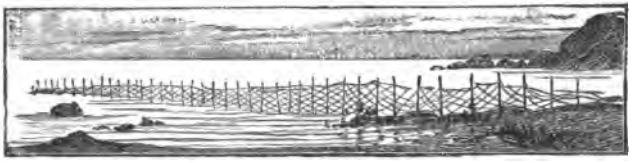
Angela had stood upon the verge of revelation, but Gay was minded to keep that past life shrouded in twilight. She must whisk the tell-tale word from those silly lips, and give their owner one more chance to invest herself with that dignity which suited a consort and matron of the Westover clan.

"It is nothing, mamma, but that we have been disagreeing a little, and this is the kiss of reconciliation," was the apology given her mother for the sudden outburst of affection.

Mrs. Westover could never quite understand her daughter; her inward commentary generally was, the dear child has so much enthusiasm. She gets it from her father's side. The Westovers are all

high-spirited. Now, however, she said, turning to her daughter-in-law—

"Mr. Hoggard is downstairs; he wants to see you particularly, Angela, about confirmation; the bishop comes next week, you know." With an arm about her waist, she drew the young widow from the room.



CHAPTER V.

YOUNG Mrs. Westover was characterized by expensive tastes. Her hair-brushes had stamped leather handles; her colognes ran a gamut of perfume from "Venella," as she called it, to *mille fleurs* —"meal flowers," as she would have it. Those first consolations of her widowhood, the tea-gowns, purchased in Denver by Miss Steptoe, presented every variety that black with or without white can offer. One morning she would trail across the grass at Mrs. Westover's heels, feeding the poultry; the next, she would strangle yawns for hours together in the parlour,

longing for neighbours to drop in; and it was quite amusing to see her during these periods of *ennui*, imitating with precision Gay's head toss, proud step, and other mannerisms.

Angela's sublime unconcern of duties surprised Miss Westover occasionally into an energetic reproof, after which Angela would wind her arms about the girl's neck, and whisper in her ear—

"Oh, Gay-sie, don't scold, I'm awful lonesome; but I do dote on hearing you talk, when you are nice; your ways are so like Mr. Wustover's ways, only he wuz lots kinder than you. He wuz a grand man, and powerful fond of me. I see you don't believe that, but you just go and ask Mr. Harrison."

To quote from her, Angela had "a peck of words" at command in which to express Mr. Westover's untiring devotion. She

had a way, too, of being caressing, which made Gay think that, under the influence of love, she would melt and become mouldable. To questions, Don't you want to sew, to take a walk, to read a book? Angela would invariably assent, assent being easier than dissent; but the occupation was ended almost as soon as begun, for Angela would find refuge in a nap, or in the contents of a little bag that hung at her girdle, containing lumps of sugar, a handful of raisins, coffee-grains, or coriander seeds; indeed, the edges of her teeth were already beginning to wear away under the effect of perpetual nibbling.

Mr. Hoggard came oftener than ever, long and serious conversations with the widow being a necessary prelude to the confirmation which was to take place soon.

"She's a mighty nice little thing," he

would say to himself after such visits. "I like her immensely, for all that she calls her food grub half the time. She'll outgrow that; she's enough ahead of Miss Gay, who is all airs and graces and conceit. I don't like to be left alone with that one nowadays; she pins you to every word you say. Why, you have to be preaching sermons all the time you are talking to her. Now, young Mrs. Westover meets you at every turn with a smile. The other day when I was over there, she flew out of the room for something, leaving Miss Gay in the chimney corner; and I tell you my coat-tails flew after her—the old lady, anything, in these days, but Miss Gay."

Mr. Hoggard, as we have seen, was not acceptable either to the colonel or his daughter. By the elder Mrs. Westover he was denominated "a rough diamond;" by

the younger, "a beautiful char-ac-ter." He realized for her the ideal of holiness.

Miss Westover said one day, with epigrammatic tartness, "Most people have the defects of their qualities, but it seems to me that Mr. Hoggard has the defects without the qualities."

Then, in the midst of an applauding "Ha! ha!" from her father, she walked across the floor with the air of a gallant ship that sweeps the blue crinkly seas, its sails steadied by a head wind.

The chief ground of the Reverend Philip's quarrel against this young lady was her turn for epigram, which he could not abide; for he was of a florid turn himself, and had been plunged into perplexity once on receiving the following oracular letter from the bishop, after one of that gentleman's visits to the county: "Dear Hoggard, your parish needs more

P. P. P., and less P. P. P." The Reverend Philip gave up the solution of this enigma.

"Why, Hoggard, it's as plain as a pike-staff," cried the colonel, when it was referred to him. "The bishop means that the parish requires more pie, pudding, and pig; less piety, prayer, and preaching, eh?"

The colonel was not above relishing the tonic of irony upon the parson's slow mind.

Summer danced away to the southward, leaving the world to the embrace of autumn, which in its turn wheeled around, and, in the midst of radiant smiling, stole further and further away, until Lady's-Meade stood at last face to face with winter—not a harsh mistress in southern Virginia; a little more rigorous than autumn, a good deal more self-restrained than summer, sharing in the shy reserve

and Puritanical sweetness of the slow reluctant spring, which is here almost twin sister to winter. A slight fall of snow sent master, servant, and beast to their winter avocations.

Mrs. Westover sat over red embers in the wood-panelled hall, occupied with masses of white soft wool, which she was knitting into tiny white socklings. Now and then she glanced towards the west window, which showed an outdoor landscape clothed with something soft and white as the wool lying on the knee. In the country strange stillness reigns when the snow is falling. The silence of the hall on a winter morning is broken only by the occasional snap of a twig in the embers; the motion of the hound dozing at Mrs. Westover's foot; the ticking of the steeple clock behind the staircase; the click of the lady's needles, blending

now and again with a faintly hummed lullaby which falls from her lips. The stillness, broken by intermittent domestic sounds, stir within her bosom memories that have long slept. Thus knitting and dreaming herself back to the early years of motherhood, you might see her lift her eyes many times during a morning to the crayon sketch of Meade on the wall between the two windows, that let into the hall such soft low tints from the world outside.

"My boy is in heaven," she murmurs. "God bless him! May his boy, if the Lord send him one, be a worthy son of my son."

The lullaby was easily changed to a prayer on Mrs. Westover's lips. The mistress of Lady's-Meade took her joys as she did her sorrows—tranquilly; not so the master. He was jubilant over thoughts

of the little stranger about to bless his family.

"It shall be a boy, of course. By all the thunders, Dr. Pillsbury, it must and shall be a boy, and we'll give it his father's name, and his father's before *him*, and *his* before *him!*" and the colonel rapped the hall table till it rang again.

In spite of this ambiguity in the way of pronouns, Dr. Pillsbury understood, of course, and smiled the ready assent, as if he fully agreed with the fiery old gentleman, and was minded to do his part in carrying out the general plan. Dr. Pillsbury, a dry, sagacious, comfort-loving old codger, was glad of any excuse which might bring him to Lady's-Meade, for Lady's-Meade was a comfortable place to come to, I can tell you. So he came mornings, afternoons, and sometimes nights during the whole of that winter.

"Don't put the mare up, Amos; t'arn't worth while. I kyarn't stay long. Just looked in to see how things are going along. I've got to be down on the other side of the Neck by nightfall," Dr. Pillsbury would say.

But while his shaggy old mare stood shivering under her saddle-bags in the yard, the doctor would warm his hands over the blazing hickorys, and his stomach with smoking apple-toddy, which Colonel Westover could mix, infusing into it such a flavour as you would reckon belonged to the elixir of life, or, still better, the fountain of eternal youth. In their talk there was not much said about the event. Politics were the theme, of course; and as these two men did not row in the same boat, there was often *that* between them which was hotter than apple-toddy or crackling hickory.

"What's a man to do?" Dr. Pillsbury would cry. "It's easy enough to talk about corruption and the like, but what's a man to do? He's got to *live*, and my opinion is that there isn't any more corruption now than there always has been. The world's pretty much the same now that it always was. Corruption is a war-cry I am tired of, Colonel Westover—heartily tired of it."

"The devil you are, Dr. Pillsbury; then why do you serve it?" The doctor's son, be it known, was an office-holder under the Republicans, and they, in Colonel Westover's mind, were but the synonym for corruption.

"The Republicans have the upper hand; they constitute the Government now." Dr. Pillsbury thus parried the colonel's thrust, moistening his lips the while with the spicy beverage. "My motto is, Serve

the Government, stand by things that *are*, loyally and faithfully."

The colonel blew scorn from his lips. "It's a comfortable motto that, to stand by the strong against the weak, when it butters your bread and heats your stove, eh?"

"What is a man to do?" Dr. Pillsbury returned to the first proposition over a second glass of toddy, thinking of the colonel's warm hearth-corner on one side, and the long bleak ride to the far end of the Neck on the other; then, puckering up his features with a puzzled air, he would cry, "Your son and the home folks on one side, a lifelong friend, like you, Colonel Westover, on the other; what is a man to do? Such a man stands between fire and water."

"Then take your water and put your fire out with it; that is all I've got to say,

Dr. Pillsbury;" and the colonel would drain off his second glass of apple-toddy at a draught.

It was often long after nightfall before worthy Dr. Pillsbury could make up his mind to get started away from Lady's-Meade.

"Damned old readjuster!" Colonel Westover would cry, after the departure. "I wouldn't have him practise in my family a day, if there was a democrat doctor under twenty miles of us. A pity, too; he's a shrewd fellow—I'd pit him against the best doctors in Folksmouth—but a bad Virginian. His father was all right before him; wrong streak somewhere. Damned old readjuster!"

Scorn rode at full tilt across the bridge of the colonel's high-arched nose, and set a fiery heel on each expressive feature; scorn, not contempt, for con-

tempt requires a dash of innate meanness.

Mrs. Westover thought she might train herself to endure without flinching the word "damned," about republican or readjuster, if only it could be dismissed from every other connection; for perhaps you do not realize how strongly the spirit of patriotism beat in her gentle bosom. She had been bred to hearing politics discussed all her life, and she placed States rights and paying the State debt second only to her Prayer-book.

On Ash Wednesday, Thomas Meade Westover, junior, made his appearance at Lady's-Meade, and found awaiting him a name highly honourable, a lovely mamma, two doting grandparents, a spirited aunt, some adoring servants, and a welcome generally of the most genial sort, in addition to a pleasant cradle, the one in

which the Westover babies had been rocked, and the various creature comforts which usually fall to the lot of the tiny human animal. Yes, the fatted calf had been killed for him, though he, poor helpless creature, was not quite ready to eat it, for as yet he preferred nutriment of the milder sort.

"Ash Wednesday; is he to be saint or sinner?" laughed Gay.

"Didn't I promise you a boy?" cried the colonel to his wife.

No tear had come near his eye when, in the prime of manhood, he had looked upon the face of his new-born eldest son; but now in his hoary yet splendid decline, he twitched the sparkling drop from his lash when he caught sight of the red pudgy little thing dozing in a nest of tucks and lace like a lap-dog, that was to go henceforward by

the name of Thomas Meade Westover, junior.

The colonel did not tarry long on this first visit to his grandson, but he came a dozen times a day to have delighted peeps at this atom of manhood, who lay on his back, his fists doubled up as if he would like to box these inconsiderate new relations, who were introducing him to a very chilly world of chance and change. Occasionally his face would became corrugated with an odd elfish anger. What wonder that he should be overcome by the prospect of that great, dim, solemn, mysterious future, about to unroll before him?

At dinner the colonel called for some sherry; drank, and made every one else drink, to the health of Angela and her boy. In the evening, after the tea-things were set aside, and he was alone, he drew

the candle-stand to the fire, it being a cold night, put the great family Bible on its rosewood slab, took a seat in his arm-chair, and opened the monster book at the fly-leaves which contained his family record; then, pipe in mouth, he proceeded to write down, in elegant lettering, the following entry, "Born at Lady's-Meade, parish of Evelynton, county of Werecomicomo, Virginia, on Ash Wednesday, Feb. —, the year of our Lord 18—, Thomas Meade Westover, first and only son of Thomas Meade Westover and Angela his wife."

It took the colonel two good hours to make this entry, his head leaning upon his hand, his pipe forgotten upon the candle-stand. Anticipation, started by the name of this infant grandson, gave way to retrospection; the past was borne in upon his mind overwhelmingly. A past genera-

tion revived. His father, bluff and hearty, giving the voluptuous swell to his formal Jeffersonian coat, cutting his pigeon wing at the county dances, which were plentiful enough, or betting a silver eagle at whist with his own parson, or proposing "The Ladies" as a toast at the barbecue dinners, which seasoned politics with well-cured hog-meat in the old days. Then his grandfather swept before him, the master of Blandon Hall, who knew Shakespeare by heart, and dropped his *h*'s in order to be English. "Stand by your State, Tawm, my boy, stand by your State," the old gentleman was wont to say; for he could wink at violence, at an overstepping appetite, or at a touch of *braggadocio*—but disloyalty, never. "Hell is for traitors," he often said, when heated with after-dinner brandy. "A gentleman can never be a traitor." The master of Blandon

Hall, at the age of seventy, had dropped upon one knee and kissed the finger-tips of a beautiful girl, who had come into the county, reigned for a brief season as a raving, ravishing belle, fired the young men all through the country-side, and then vanished like a star. The old gentleman worshipped beauty as well as honour. There were a great many words he always spelt with capitals, in the old-fashioned way, and beauty was one. In his mind all men should be honourable, all women beautiful.

When the colonel roused himself, it was to find the room cold. He rubbed his knees, got up, shook himself, and said aloud, "They handed the honour of a gentleman down to me, and by all the thunders I'll hand the same, untarnished, down to him who comes after me; that's what I call the duty of one generation to another."

Then he went to the buffet, poured out a glass of sherry, and drained it to the last honey-like drop. "I must put some heat into my old limbs," he thought, "for it's deuced cold in here." When he consulted the face of the steeple-clock in the hall, he was no longer surprised that it was cold; he had sat up over his family Bible until past three.

Uncle Crutch Amos had been allowed a peep at the morsel of humanity who lay cuddled in his cradle, like a chestnut worm inside his chestnut. Very reverentially did Uncle Crutch Amos regard it; he bowed before it, rubbed his hands together, and talked to it with the same tune in his voice as that in which he addressed God in his prayers; for extremes meet, and the infant seems both fearfully and wonderfully near to its Maker.

"Eber sence I wuz bawnd, I's libbed

under de protection ob de Westovers;" the old negro brought his furrowed cheek in close proximity to the baby's, and strove to decipher in its wrinkled lines and semi-fluid flesh some germs of likeness to his patron's family. "Yes, I wuz bawnd and I'se libbed under de protection ob de Westovvers ob La-ady's-Meade, an' I duzen' like 'um—I downright *lubs* 'em, an' I lubs ebery inch ob groun' roun' La-ady's-Meade, I duz, an' I'll lib by 'em an' die by 'em clar on to de eend."

Uncle Crutch Amos looked more as if he would die than live by this last scion of the house of Westover; but his loyal utterances produced no effect upon the infant's face, unless it were irritation, for it forthwith puckered up its features, and squeezed forth a good round, roaring screech, a grotesque parody upon the colonel's "Ha, ha!"

"I wuz nigh on to twel' years ole when cun'l's own christening dinner wuz cooked; but I waited on de cook, an' I members it, like t'wuz yestiddy. Dee-ar wuz twenty-fo' dishes, and folks come from do oder side o' Whitema-sh crick, an' clar up from Folksmiff." Uncle Amos thus unburdened his memory in the kitchen, and seasoned his oration upon the grandeur of the old-time Westovers with a hunk of "middlin'" and a chunk of corn-bread; and how this did lubricate the organ of speech! "Dee-ar wuz heaps and heaps o' arnts. Miss Ginnie Barskerville; she wuz Mis' Bel Grarfton's gran'-mother, Po'twine; she wuz de head ob dot cum'ny as come from Folksmiff. Dar wuz heaps an' heaps ob darncin'—de youngsters trade, I calls it, an' it wuz de biggest dinin' out dat anybody in dis county eber sot eyes on fo' or sence; an' dee-ar wuzent a

niggah on dis hee-ah plantation, 'cep'n de cooks an' de waiters, as did a lick o' wu'k dat day, or de nex', an' de nex' nuther."

The elder darkies listened to these glorifications of the old *régime* with reverence; but not so the younger—they shook their heads, doubted, and disbelieved. The old times were not their times; for even into the primitive seclusion of Lady's-Meade there was creeping a lingo which bristled with the much-abused epithets, culture, refinement, social equality, coloured ladies, coloured gentlemen, and the like. Fine words, when they mean not fine things, are a lingo, and nothing more.

CHAPTER VI.

AT first the Westover baby did not seem to be overjoyed at making the acquaintance of his new relations, but as time went on his manners improved. He learned how to smile, and practised this art upon the numerous cousins who flocked in from all sides to bend their knee before his heroship's mahogany shrine. They offered the usual amount of incense, declaring that his infinitesimal nose had begun to copy the colonel's Roman arch, and that he was born to be an orator; you could tell that by the way he held his fists. They thought Angela's lingo, consisting of

words with extraordinary endings—of the itsy-bitsy-nitsy family—a marvel of intuition, her lullabies nothing short of seraph music. Alas! the Westover cousins, like the rest of the world, regarded motherhood as a function, and relegated it to instinct.

By-and-by a package arrived bearing the Denver postmark, and containing a velvet case, within which, on its bed of embossed satin, reposed a gold-lined drinking-cup, the gift of Harrison; while another case enshrined a silver napkin-ring, which was the gift of Miss Steptoe. A note from this lady drew motherly moisture to Mrs. Westover's eyes by tender phrases concerning her dead son.

An infant in a house is a source of much pure joy; the beginning life repeats to the ending the lesson of the resurrection, its office being to renew daily these promises

of immortality. Thus Colonel Westover seemed almost to stand face to face with his youth again, and Mrs. Westover doubled and trebled the grandmother's delight in Angela's child.

Angela felt herself to be a personage of infinite importance. The colonel laid on her plate at table the choicest tit-bits of the fowl; Mrs. Westover entertained her all day long, if she would listen, with stories of the baby's ancestors. How a collateral great-great-aunt had been one of the seven Eves of Stafford, so called because these seven sisters from Gunston Hall, England, were the first gentlewomen to come to Virginia; consequently, intermarriage with the first gentlemen of the colony made them the mothers of the old families. How one of the chiefs of the Westover clan had been a knight of the Golden Horseshoe, and had been the first,

after Spottiswoode, to look down, from the heights of the Blue Ridge, upon the Great Valley. How Blandon Hall, where the colonel spent his boyhood, possessed a secret chamber, in which Bacon was hidden at the time of the first rebellion. How Tom Nelson, from whom the colonel was descended, and from whom he got the name of Tawm, bombarded his own house on Yorktown Heights during the war of the Revolution, in order to compel the British general quartered within it to surrender; and how he was a poor man on account of this ruin of his property, never made good to him by the Government, even when this last was consolidated in after-years.

Angela received these attentions from the old folks demurely, if with too many yawns. Mrs. Westover was the first to reproach herself with wearying the "dear

child," or the colonel would cry out, "By the thunders, ole Mis', when your tongue gets to working on the pedigree, it's hung in the middle. Silence is the best nurse. Here's the di-van, daughter—a good thing to take counsel with, as the Turks tell us. There, lie down, pretty head and all. Is it a soft pillow, filled with the breast feathers of the madam's favourite goose? Yes, that is best. Let none but Nature dictate." Alas! how many fallacies are endured on account of the word "Nature!"

When the Westover cherub had outlived its tendency to colic, the Raphaelesque creature that went by the name of its mamma took her seat in the family coach, and was driven for the first time in many months to church. Torm, the coachman, wore, as his tribute to the sabbath, a high stiff collar, penitentially painful, and over its corners he looked as repellently glum

as he could, this glumness being his best substitute for solemnity when he drove the "fam'ly to chutch." Angela walked up the aisle, took her seat in the Westover pew, and poured back from her face the flood of nun's veiling attached to her widow's bonnet. More than one eye, in spite of devout kneeling, wandered in the direction of the cheek thus unveiled. The left one was turned in the direction of the chancel, and it bewitched the Rector of Evelynton, engaged as he was in the pious office of reciting the prayer, quite as much as it had once bewitched Dowlie in the proscenium box of the Denver opera-house. What mattered the change of scene? the church was as favourable a background to the widow as the theatre had been to the *prima donna*. Mr. Hoggard, it is true, had a handkerchief pressed upon one eye; but the other, the naughty other one, was, alas!

turned full upon that dimple. He could not help seeing it all through the service, as he looked down into it and drank out of it a coy but irresistible draught of love. Could you blame him? Mariolatry does not belong to the Catholics only; it is instinct in every man's bosom, and the Rev. Philip Hoggard was as susceptible to the round-limbed young mother kneeling before him in her amplitude of crêpe, as Raphael would have been could he have stood behind those chancel rails and feasted his artist eyes with a rapture half mystic, half material upon those lowered lids, those blossom tints, and those dimples which twinkled into life every time that her lips murmured, "Good Lord, deliver us." But the Rector of Evelynton did not pray to be delivered; he winked away that drop of moisture which the excitement of the moment caught into his eyes, looked,

loved, adored, and muttered the service mechanically.

But hush! the congregation is rising from its knees, and the Rev. Philip is precipitated into the solemn cough preluding his sermon, a fine one to-day, the subject "Humility." "Especially do we need this quality, my hearers"—he looked at Angela whenever he said *my* anything—"in the department of science"—the Rev. Philip was very conservative—"it is dangerous to examine the hidden forces of Nature too closely. Hidden forces of Nature, did I say? The very words are an invention of the agnostics. Investigation weakens faith, and philosophy is a weapon of the evil one." The congregation of Evelynton were not worried overmuch with science of any kind, but they leaned with a sense of comfort upon the statement so boldly launched, that investigation injures faith,

for much trouble does such a belief save in these days of restless inquiry. "Earthquakes, cyclones, and the rest of it, angels make them, or maybe devils; we don't know which exactly; only this much is true—it is best to leave it all to God." Thus shouldering all mental responsibility upon God, the rector ended with an application of his theory to himself, "I am glad to be behind the age, my brethren—proud of it, because my Master tells me to be a humble man."

Gay's lip trembled upon a smile as she listened to Mr. Hoggard's adjuration upon humility, a smile sharpening to decided curves of disdain, for she was a young woman busy with the problems of life, and, as we find at her age, a tendency to ruthless criticism. She had a way of saying that if the poet is gold-tongued, the critic is silver-tongued, and of thinking that the

critic's mission was an exalted one; not that of sneerer, still less of eulogist, for he must be seer, weeder-out of God's garden of geniuses. We who have lived long enough know that the office is a rare one, and that you may find twenty charming poets to one just and candid critic; for truth we want, not red, but white, heat—a degree of intensity not often reached, except for creation. Our critic must not be a soured and disappointed author, but a buoyant, pure man and woman. Alas for the arrows of a cruel censorship hurled at some shivering St. Sebastian, a beautiful soul enduring the tearing of his flesh for art's sake! To the question, after the sermon was over, "Well, Miss Westover, how did you like Mr. Hoggard this morning?" she gave a dissentient bend of her head, and the answer, "Don't ask me if you expect approbation." Yet she went

on all the same, for she had the clever girl's passion for cutting and slashing. "Why, it was an intellectual poultice, soothing syrup for the mind, the last thing we of Evelynton want. We want stirring up, not smoothing down. As for me, I am tired of being behind the age; if I am born in the nineteenth century, I think it's a sin to live out of it." "Ah! I'm afraid you are a critic, Miss Westover," pursued the questioner, a certain Miss Rosamond Milbourne, visiting the Wormleys of Roseghil.

This and many other things were said going out of church. One of the young Wormley men, who had nearly dislocated his neck in the attempt to get a view of the young mother on her first outing, remarked to a neighbour in stage whispers, "She has fine eyes, but lacks eyebrows."

"Makes up in eyelashes, Tip. They have quite a swing; did you notice?"

Mrs. Wormley was shaking Miss Anne Grymes by both hands, and saying, "Come home to dinner, Miss Anne; we'll have a good old-fashioned talk," which meant that she would pour out into the ear of this most notable spinster of Werewocomico all her grievances in monologue. "How dy do, Mary? How's the colonel? Glad to see you out, Angela. How's that dear baby?" pursued the lady of Roseghill, punctuating her phrases at intervals with a monosyllabic, apologetic cough. She had a way of saying nothing with a great deal of manner

Out of this "ecclesiastical club-house," as the colonel called Evelynton, the gentry poured, "a most religious people, but pretty good sinners for all that," to the colonel's way of thinking. He preferred

home and a history of the war or a parliamentary debate for his Sunday morning.

The Reverend Philip nearly tore a rent in his surplice, so great was his haste to get out of the priestly vestment and into the manly overcoat, to be in time to conduct young Mrs. Westover to her coach. She lingered, smiling, and when seated therein, he gave her hand a moist squeeze. A slight rain had set in, giving an almost spiritual expression to the sylph-like maples and ashes and dog-woods that tossed themselves against the heavy colouring of pine in the background.

"Nice drizzly-draw-zly weather, Miss Westover," said Ross Guimbert, holding in an ugly bare-boned horse that seemed nervously eager to start. "Good for the wheat. Tell the colonel I hope to see

him at the Court-house, about that horse I'm going to trade off. He'll know! Good day, Mis' Westover." Gilbert's whip touched his hat, and the bare-boned horse, not willing to be restrained longer, pressed forward, a leader in the van.

Guimbert was from the Neck, the least aristocratic part of the county, and was a kind of dangler-on to the skirts of the gentry; but he was a prosperous man, with an abundance of the grace which Mr. Hoggard had been extolling—humility.

The rector dallied by the side of the carriage, his head bare to the rain, looking at Mrs. Westover, but talking to Miss Westover. In answer to something that she said about Dante—for she prided herself in being a well-read young woman—he replied—

"Though I cannot agree with Dante in his denominational faith, yet he has said

some things that deserve to be mentioned and remembered."

"Yes, unquestionably——"

This speech was interrupted by a gentle stroke of Hardtimes' whip. The impatient horses started, and the Westover coach tumbled along the miry road, getting delicious spatters of drops upon its dusty, dilapidated old back. The last view of the rector showed him waving farewell with his felt hat.

Angela leaned back, thinking of him in his white surplice; rather, perhaps, thinking of the admiring glances he had cast upon her. A woman feels a man's admiring glance through several thicknesses of crêpe, as keenly as the loam below the earth's surface feels the sun's gleam, and bursts forth into flowers.

"Angela," Gay said one evening, as the two sat sewing in the parlour, "are you

happy here with us—as happy as you could be in a different place?"

"Yes."

The person addressed was too busy adjusting a puff of blond to a bit of muslin to respond with greater acumen.

"If you could choose, would you stay here always?"

"Yes." Pins were in Angela's mouth; she answered with difficulty.

"Come, think again. I do not believe you," insisted the questioner. "If some one offered you a means of escape, I almost believe you would accept it, eh, honour bright?"

Angela started slightly, dropped her blond, leaned her brow upon her hand, and abandoned herself to that inner twilight we call reverie.

A negro lad came into the room with a basket of logs topped with chips. These

last were thrown into the fireplace in such prodigal handfuls, that very soon a flame shot forth, diffusing itself throughout the long drawing-room; rose brilliancy played upon the conventional plaster flowers intertwining the cornice below the ceiling. The walls flushed to a mellow pink, while the dark chair-boarding and darker mahogany of the furniture quickened to a deep terra-cotta blush. The portraits on the wall lost the stereotyped simper, and twinkled each with individuality. Governor Parke winked; John Randolph of Roanoke, of darkly delicate, boyish countenance, scowled his invective from the further end of the room; while Polly Pendleton, the beauty of a preceding generation, whose distinction consisted in having married her hundredth lover, smiled down from the glowing dusk in which she sat enthroned from her frame of moulded gilt.

The artist in Gay sprang up. She dropped her work also, took a survey, first of the room, then of her sister-in-law. From the beginning her influence had been potent with Angela; her sayings stimulated thinking, and her enthusiasm was contagious. People had said of her brother and herself that he rode a hobby-horse, whereas she drove a fad. However that may be, she allowed Angela to talk freely when with her, and strove, so far as she could, to make the Western girl stand face to face with her own thoughts. Taking in hers the two hands that lay idle in the blond, and impelling the upward glance, she said softly—

"Do you know that you are prettier than when you first came? less colour, more expression. Now you are wonderfully like that Madonna I have always

wanted to paint, if—if——" She broke off abruptly.

"If what?" was Angela's innocent question. "Mr. Wustover always had an 'if' too. Is it the mole on my cheek? Mr. Wustover set store on the mole; he said it was like the patches ladies used to wear, and that it made me look air-istocratic-like. I often wanted to have it taken off; he said no."

Gay shook her head impatiently. "'If' is an interloper, oftentimes, between friends; sometimes an impertinent mar-plot."

"It is a funny thing. People have petted me lots in my life, but somehow they've always a way of looking at me and saying 'if,' or looking it. I wisht I knew what they meant."

"When I find out fully what 'if' means in your case, Angela, I will tell you."

"Ef 'ifs and ans were pots and pans, what work there'd be for tinkers!'" Angela sang out. Adages focus the wit of preceding generations, and once in a while she was shrewd enough to decorate herself with the borrowed sparkle.

Gay quickened to laughter, then almost immediately clouded. "You are not easy to understand, for all you are such a childish creature. When you first came here, you fancied the change—I knew that; then little Meade was your plaything; but now, what do you really like?"

"Why, Gaysie, I like you, and——"

"But I lecture you about—well, about all sorts of things; I don't let you live your own life. You can never do that at Lady's-Meade. Mamma is always advising about the baby; my father overwhelming you with anecdotes of the Mexican war

and the Duke of Wellington, or quotations from Byron. Poor Angela! I am sorry for you from the depths of my heart."

Gay's voice, with its freighting of delicate divinations, struck the inner chords of Angela's being, and strung her to saying things about herself that she did not know she thought before. What had been vague to her became suddenly informed and definite. Gay encouraged her words, for upon them she knew that the temple of human convictions is built.

"We are domestic," Gay said. "Do you not miss the musical life sometimes?"

"Sometimes I don't mind, then again I do. Do you know what it is to be hungry, thirsty, cold, for want of music. Then is the time I feel as if singing would feed and warm me. Oh lawsie!" (here was an ignominious abatement of her enthusiasm); "well, I s'pose you can't have everything,

fam'ly and all." The word "family" surprised the speaker into sudden sharp consciousness of a new fact, so she resumed, "That's it, Gaysie; there's the word. I never can go it the whole hog. Fam'ly! I get tired of never being with one of my own kind; I get *that* tired of cump'ny manners, and fam'ly, and port-rites, and such-like, you know." She glanced along the walls, whereon were enthroned ancestors half-veiled now in a ruddy dusk, for the chip-born flame was subsiding. "Yes, I get tired of trying to sit and stand and talk, just so. Even Meade, Gay, why, he will leave his mammy any time to go to granma. You are all good to me—I b'lieve you're too good; if you were bad sometimes, it would be a kind of a change—do you see?"

Gay did see; but she only said, "Poor child, poor child!" and patted the hand

she held; for she knew that things must be as they were, that they must continue as they were, and that it was Angela who would have to change. Yet had she not changed? yes, but her very change suggested a limit soon to be reached. The bond between Angela and Gay had been recognition on the part of the latter, for recognition is the intellectual side of love. Mrs. Westover and the colonel did not love Angela, but the ideal they had raised of her in their hearts; Gay, only making to herself no ideal, had stooped to the real woman. And yet the two lived in worlds as far apart as planets in the solar system; not living by the same truths, nor yet dying by the same faith, each adored a deity of her own making. Angela had not risen beyond the worship of the Power revealed to her through her own bodily self; Gay's

worship was of the Power within revealed to her through her own opinion—a more spiritual God than Angela's, but a purely individual one, into which she put the best part of herself yet found.

A voice in the yard calling out, "Howdy, Unc' Amos," communicated to the two ladies the fact that Mr. Hoggard was come—to tea, of course.

Gay went away in search of her mother. When she came back, a half-hour later, it was to find taking place in the parlour a tableau which electrified her. The room was in shadow, no lights having been brought. Angela was at the piano, singing softly to an accompaniment of low chords. At her side, very close, was Mr. Hoggard's six feet of heavy manhood. At the moment of entering, Gay saw the rector lean over the widow, murmur something in her ear, then plant a sputtering kiss

upon her cheek. Angela's head drooped to this demonstration, her hands still busy with notes. Was it possible that she should be acquiescent, not resenting what to Gay seemed an outrageous impertinence? She felt angry enough for two; she would not withdraw, thereby encouraging others of the same sort to follow, yet she could not make up her mind to confront the pair too suddenly, lest she should surprise some other love-signal—the thought to her a horror. She therefore advanced into the room with eyes fixed on Polly Pendleton, scrutinizing carefully, as though she had never seen them before, the insignia of a bygone century's girlhood—the wreath of roses, the harp in the background, the lamb in the foreground, the starling on a tree, the deathless smile that curled bowed lips matching features made according to the portrait-painter's

rule. She stood with back to the piano in a kind of accusatory silence.

Meanwhile, the participants in the tableau found in music the excuse for proximity, hoping that all else remained unseen in the sombre shadow of the room, favourable to delusion. Angela hurried into the preluding chords of "Home, Sweet Home," that being a bond of union betwixt song and hymn tune. Her voice flew upward, a silver fountain exquisite on the upper rounds, and Hoggard joined thereto a deep, growling baritone—a grating voice of which Gay had said that it had been chewed and its softness swallowed by some hungry ancestor, who had bequeathed its remnant to the Reverend Philip. He inflated his broad chest, and puffed and blew so over it that, when Portwine entered with the lamp to announce tea, he was sufficiently red in

the face to give proof of a glorious abandonment to music.

Later, when the family was assembled in the parlour, Gay strove to go through with her usual duties as graciously as might be, but it was in the spirit of grim resolution. She beat her father at chess, listening to his favourite topic, the war, usually trotted forward as interludes in chess, with an interest too intense to be quite natural.

"Two to my one, eh? Well, the United States enrolled four soldiers to our one during the war," sang out the colonel in a clarion tone, interrupting himself to push away a defeated pawn rather savagely. "Over two thousand battles were fought at the rate of more than one a day, aha! Check to your queen, Gay. Why don't you learn chess, Hoggard? It's the royal game, entirely

orthodox, the science of pure position. I like puzzles, problems, enigmas—anything that requires a solution."

The silence following the colonel's occasional outbursts was broken only by the click of the elder Mrs. Westover's knitting-needles, the metallic grind of young Mrs. Westover's scissors as she cut into a bit of work intended for the church fair, the rustle of the leaves of the *Southern Churchman* which Mr. Hoggard was looking over, for no one liked to interrupt the colonel's after-supper game. The chess-pieces reigned supreme. How picturesque! The bishop with sidelong move, suggestive of casuistry; the mathematical, military stride of the castle; the bold, enterprising leap of the knight; industry of the pawn—representing the workman; the universal possibilities of the queen—the genius; the restricted,

cautious step of the king — limited monarchy, the germ of democracy. It may well be called the intellectual game. It is the play of peoples and of governments.

"Sing a tune, daughter," proclaimed the colonel, a little pettishly, seeing he was going to be beaten. By "daughter" he meant Angela, for since her coming among them he had bestowed this name upon her as the expression of welcome to an outsider. "Sing one of your ditties—one of those ballads I'm so fond of, daughter," again commanded the colonel, turning around for a glimpse of the widow bent over a square of burlaps, beads, worsted, and a lot of bright tomfoolery. "Your throat was made for singing, and not for twisting over yarn; leave that to 'Ole Mis' yonder, whose singing days are over, I reckon, though she can hum as sweet

a lullaby even now as I want to hear. The baby's her music-master. Come, a song."

Of course, no one ever dreamed of disobeying the colonel. In the midst of Angela's rigmarole, trilled from the piano, he suddenly heard the words of doom solemnly pronounced by his daughter—check—mate, and he was no better pleased for having prophesied the catastrophe.

"Damn it, Lady Gay Spanker, but you take advantage of an old man—you young ones all do; but it's the music that did it. I can't listen and think too, and only one brain. Try another?"

But Gay pushed back her chair, moving the negative. "No, papa; the piano outrivals the chess-board, I see." The lines were sharp in her face, set towards Mr. Hoggard for the first time during the evening. "I would rather go back to

hemming my kitchen towels than to playing chess with a half-hearted man. Music is very edifying; it draws you to study harmony and practise simplicity." Simplicity being on Gay's lips ironically breathing for duplicity.

The colonel used to say of his daughter, when she was a child, that hers was a temper thorny as a cactus; being quick to anger himself, however, he respected this quality in others. Just now he inferred that she was put out with him for absent-mindedness over the game, as he undoubtedly would have been in her place. Giving her a little chuck under the chin, with the words, "Chip of the old block, Gaysie," he settled himself in an easy-chair, and abandoned his brain to the delights of music.

Late that night Gay went to Angela's room, and found her sister-in-law sitting in

a kind of white-gowned meditation beside little Meade's crib.

"Angela, I have come to scold you," she announced immediately, striving the while not to look unkindly on the white-armed apparition, who sat fronting her, clasping and unclasping a bracelet.

Angela hardened her countenance at these words, presenting it, an immovable wall, to Gay's searching eyes. She uttered no word, but it was an outward assent that meant inward dissent.

"For the sake of your—our name of Westover, you should repel such advances as I saw you receive from Mr. Hoggard this evening; you know what I mean, Angela."

"Westover isn't my name, but yours; it's a borrowed one. I'd as lief give it back, if you want."

Gay shook her head, drearily surprised

by her sister-in-law's attempt at defiance. "It is your child's; at least you value him?"

They glanced at the crib wherein the little fellow lay, a hand up, protesting in sleep; lines of self-will were beginning to run athwart those of dimplement on a face of epicurean roundness and rosiness. His sleep was not quiet, but full of quiverings, as if stimulated by dreams. He had wonderfully long eyelashes that curled up, to hug some precious sleep-thought.

"He's not my child, but yours; a Westover, out and out. I give him back to you all for the one I took."

From a white apparition Angela turned to a very pink one. She thrust out her feet emphatically, and lifted to Gay eyes whose pupils were distended as if with belladonna; yet they looked blank.

"Why, Angela, you have learned to hate us, then?" She lifted the fine arch

of her brows and darkened upon Angela, her lip trembling upon the word of inquiry.

The truth was, Angela was more afraid of Gay's high-strung youth than she would have been of choleric maturity; the very ripeness of the latter would have made strength the matter of course. But there was something in this young girl's moral attitude which made Angela seem to herself a reproach, the notion being so vague that she rather felt than knew it; notions with her not having ripened into convictions. She felt herself somehow to be like a chambermaid in the presence of an empress. Nor would she have been worried with such feelings in the days when she was Meade's wife—experience had not then broken the limpid surface of self-complacency; now, however, she looked into a troubled pool. That she could do this would have revealed to

far-seeing eyes the blossom of nascent character, not of the rose or lily type, but of the variety of the puny bud that shows vitality in fern and moss. To the repeated question, "You have learned to hate us, then—all of us?" Angela dropped her head and murmured—

"No-o, not that; but you hold me down."

"Must we not, if you will not of your own accord?" She went on to speak of Angela's duties, her brother, her father and mother, and she spoke well for a young girl of but few experiences; nor would she have followed the instincts of her nature had she acted differently, ending her admonition with a burst of feeling, and the words, "You have had so much affection poured upon you, Angela, why can you not feel more deeply yourself? Does not your own heart, your own soul"

—choosing a more solemn word—"make you know what you owe to us all yourself, and——"

"Soul!" interrupted Angela, the dawn of intelligence in her eyes. She held her breath; then closed her lids, and strained attention upon a multitude of confused sounds which came swimming up to her consciousness from the world-vortex; there were wailings, doubtings, conflictings, all harmonized in the fine discords of a piece of orchestral music; but, as in that, one voice overtopped the whole, shooting out of her heart to smite her ear—it was Hoggard's. She shook her head despondingly. "How can I help it if he takes to me? I did not ask him to."

"Oh, Angela, Angela! Well, it's no use to talk longer to you to-night; perhaps you will come to see it differently to-morrow, or some day. Good night."

They parted. Thus the circle ran between them — of talk, beginning in gentleness, running through bitterness to reconciliation; only as these grew more numerous, they grew to larger circlings, thus placing the reconciliations at distances further and further apart. At first Gay was shocked at separating from her sister-in-law even for a few hours without a friendly word, but habit soon adjusted her to this. She found after a time that she was willing to sacrifice harmony to her idea of justice; but she could not carry Angela with her. Not that the latter said much; her resistance did not show itself in words, and yet it was felt by Gay. As the two grew apart, Angela absorbed into herself more and more of the little mannerisms and external refinements of her husband's family; but, strange to say, as she approached the outward standard

of ladyhood, she seemed to grow away from them in essentials. As she developed mentally, she became more definite, less the freak of fortune, more the fashioner of her own destiny. That which to Gay seemed loose and censurable was the ugly stage of this development, beyond which some people never get. Increased imperfection often brings us a step nearer to higher perfection; for man, being a paradox, must see in his mother a whim; in his primal ancestor an enigma. We cannot altogether get rid of the laws of heredity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE whole tribe of Westover could not stand against Angela's will, feeble, as it usually was, in the line of the greatest resistance; for the whole world is powerless to interpose betwixt the human and his will, once asserted.

On an evening in July, Gay, riding home from the Court-house with the mail, caught sight of Mr. Hoggard's buggy speeding briskly through the tall pines of the mill woods. At supper that night Angela did not appear, but Aunt Portwine delivered a message from her to the effect that she had gone to bed with a

headache, and wished not to be disturbed. Her non-appearance at the breakfast-table next morning caused some consternation; but the truth suddenly broke over Gay like a thunderbolt. Again she caught sight in her mind of Mr. Hoggard's buggy speeding briskly through the tall pines of the mill woods. Angela, of course, had been his companion. She believed that if she had cantered after them then, she might easily have put the rector to the blush, and forced the runaway to return to her dignity as a widow, her duty as a mother. Mr. Hoggard had always been a coward in the face of public opinion. "But perhaps it is better so," thought Miss Westover, pushing back her untasted coffee, and springing up from the table with the words, "I will go upstairs and see what is the matter with Angela." How should she break the news to those

below? she thought, as she ran up the staircase.

Angela's chamber told no tale of premeditated elopement. Gowns and slippers lay about in disorder, with here and there a child's garment. The crib was empty, for little Meade had slept in his grandmother's room the night before. The child's presence was a great happiness to Mrs. Westover, who was wont to say, "Angela is young, and sleeps heavily. I wake so often in a night. Let him sleep with me." The truth was, Angela's youth and ignorance were scapegoats that had run away with many of her maternal cares. "Why does Heaven send children to such women?" was the question Gay asked of herself, pausing in the bedroom upstairs so as to gain time before carrying her electrifying news to the pair below.

When she entered the breakfast-room at last, it was with a countenance darkly pale and resolute. "Angela has gone away." She was quite breathless. Then, seeing that neither father nor mother understood, but looked at her with a kind of blank amazement, she added, "Don't you understand? Angela has left us, has run away with Mr. Hoggard."

Mrs. Westover shook her head, unable to speak, and looked from the colonel to her daughter, and from her daughter to the colonel. The colonel flung himself impatiently out of his chair.

"You may not believe me, mother, but I know that this is a case of elopement. I would not search the house, nor question servants, nor inquire about the neighbourhood, for the least said soonest mended. They are gone from us, I know. I wish they would stay." Then she proceeded

to tell them many things which before she had screened from them with infinite care.

In the midst of this a letter was brought by a coloured lad from Mile End, a village twenty miles off, near a railroad station. This letter was from Mr. Hoggard, in which he expressed himself about his "lovely bride" in terms of jocoseness mingled with penitence. He knew that he "had stolen a march" on them all, but felt as if Mrs. Westover already regarded him "as a son-in-law."

This attempt at the jocular threw the colonel into a rage, and there was a royal scene in the breakfast-room that morning. "Son-in-law indeed! I smelt meanness in him, and now he will force himself down our throats, and after a case of genuine robbery." There were chasms between his words; his ideas, falling in

occasionally, recovered themselves afterwards, or made a spring from one significant epithet to another.

"You forget, father, that Angela took a willing share in the robbery, as you call it."

"The fellow shall not stay long in this parish if I can help it," cried the colonel, breathing heavily through his nostrils, and measuring the room with rapid strides. "I'll make it good and hot for him, if I have any handling of the affairs of this parish, as my father had before me, and his father before him."

Mrs. Westover rocked to and fro in her chair, a dull red spot in either cheek, rebuking herself for anger, and striving to be calm. She recurred again and again to Angela's unfaithfulness; the colonel, to Mr. Hoggard's.

"These two are mated. They were

never suited to us or to our ways. Can't you see that, mother?"

"But her baby, Gay. To go off and leave it! Why, the poor little lamb is not weaned." Mrs. Westover raised her handkerchief to her eyes; this to her being the climax.

"We at least have Meade's child. Is not that something to be thankful for? What do we care for Angela?"

"Oh, Gay, Angela is—was—my boy's wife. How can we forget that?"

Poor Mrs. Westover! the truth cut keenly, and Gay, in all the panoply of justice, could not realize the exquisite anguish which this shattering of idols cost. Age, like childhood, is conscious of limitations, but adolescence is proudly unconscious of them.

"She forgot; surely we may forget. We must. Come, mamma, be reasonable.

Meade's marriage was an infatuation. Angela could not be happy with us; it has been a problem all along."

Gay sat down by her mother, took her hand and patted it with the usual daughterly patronage. She spoke freely, as she had never done before, of Angela's past life, her shallowness, which they had mistaken for depth, and all the *bizarre* incidents which had befallen the girl. Before father and mother she placed the naked truth, and saw the recoil.

That Angela had gone was a shock to the simple-minded pair, but that she was unworthy redoubled the shock. Mrs. Westover's comfort through life had lain in a pious fatalism. In the death of her son she had seen God's trial of her faith, and had glowed with something of the zeal of Abraham; but here was a stroke not from God. How, then, was she to bear it?

"Of course, it is natural for a young minister to be thinking of getting married, but—— And Angela was very pretty, and all that, but——" Mrs. Westover was searching for an apology, but she could find none.

"Damn its being natural for a young minister to be thinking of getting married, unless he can do it in a decent way," fairly roared Colonel Westover, who had been walking up and down the room, his hands clenched behind him, stopping every now and then as if to fight some invisible enemy, whom he would attack, wrestle with, and finally lay low, exulting over the fallen one—all in his imagination, of course. "Phil Hoggard is a sneak; I always knew that!" cried the colonel, taking his stand in front of his wife, and revelling in this wholesale denunciation of her former clerical darling. She could still see her

way to a conscientious defence of the runaway clergyman, but could not find it in her heart to forgive the mother who had deserted her child. The scales were being cast from her eyes, and she was beginning to recall incidents of the past which showed Angela in a new light; for woman is sterner to sister woman than to brother man. She sighed deeply, for who can bear the searching light of truth without pain?

The colonel's eyes, however, were still unopened; he still saw his daughter-in-law under a glamour; the memory of her beauty and her helplessness stirred pity and anger by turns. That her ear should have been insulted with proposals to elope! With native gallantry, he could defend the female culprit, but he had no word of extenuation for the male.

"Phil Hoggard is a vulgarian; I don't

know why. His father was a good fellow and a gentleman. I knew Buck Hoggard in Hanover. Good company; he took his liquor like a man, but it was too much for him. Hadn't head enough. He married beneath him, a family of depleted gentility, the worst kind. It's bad when red blood runs to blue, and thence to white. Phil is the outcome." The colonel swept the room with his stride.

"God is no respecter of persons, Mr. Westover." His wife clinched the contrary argument with the Bible verse ever ready upon her lips.

"Then why does the Apostle Paul say that some vessels are for honour and some for dishonour?" was the colonel's retort; and he turned sharply on his wife, hoping to catch her in some confusion at this refutation. Seeing that she did not speak, he went on, "I tell you, Hoggard is a

vulgarian, Madam Westover. Why, he would have melted down our old communion service if I had let him, a gift to the parish of Evelynton in the year 1704, from her Royal Majesty, Queen Anne. He was an insult to this good historical parish."

He took a few hurried steps.

"I say he is a vulgarian, damn him!"

In proportion as the colonel grew hot Mrs. Westover grew cool, for so are the marital currents adjusted. She was impelled to throw in a mollifying word for the clergyman, fearing that his defection might keep her husband for ever out of the Church's holy pale, and to bring her lord and master into its communion was the consummation which she most devoutly wished and prayed for.

"Mr. Hoggard did not intend, of course, such indecorous haste," she began, by way

of apology. "He was carried away by his feelings, and——"

"Damn his feelings!" shouted the colonel, in a fresh burst of wrath. "He thought we would object, Mistress Westover; he was set upon having his nest lined with those shares in the Chiquita mine, and he thought that he'd make sure of his prize. I know Hoggard; you can't tell me anything new about him."

In reality this was an injustice, for dearly as Philip Hoggard loved the Chiquita mine, still he loved Angela, for he was genuinely in love, as the world goes.

"But a woman is so much more to blame than a man," faltered Mrs. Westover, in her eagerness to plead for the clerical delinquent.

To Angela her eyes were opened. She now saw the beauty's faults in all their

nakedness. This mild heart was learning how to hate for the first time.

"Why should we talk any more of either Angela or Mr. Hoggard?" interrupted Gay at last, wearied out with the *pros* and *cons* which her father and mother seemed to find a dreary comfort in exchanging. "Did they not leave us of their own accord? Then, let it be henceforth as if they had never been part and parcel of our lives; let us never so much as mention their names. Promise me you won't, papa."

"Upon my word, you are right, Gay—quite right. We won't say another word about them, for the madam here and I never did agree about that—that damned fellow Hoggard."

"Papa, papa!" admonished Gay, slipping her hand into the colonel's arm and taking a turn or two up and down the room with

him; "you promised that you would speak of them no more, don't you remember?"

"Certainly, my dear, I remember; of course, I remember."

The colonel's assent was amiable, for the ripping out of a few oaths had always the effect of relieving him of any surplusage of temper over and above the amount he could carry comfortably. Nevertheless, he straightened himself, a dash of defiance in his port, and took a couple of turns through the room, in a silence broken at intervals by these words, "The sneak! the sneak! the sneak!" delivered in finely modulated crescendo, and in varying tones of condemnation.

"And remember we have the baby, papa; he is so like Meade, every inch a Westover." Gay spoke with utmost soothing, hoping to change the current of her father's thoughts.

"Ah! he *is* a splendid boy!" The colonel's blue eyes lit, and his eagle features softened with pleasure, for he fell innocently into the trap which his daughter laid for him. "He has *my* father's forehead already, Mary. Have you noticed that?"

He stood still for a moment in front of his wife, placed his hand upon her head with reverence, defiance melting away from him, his bosom heaving with the sweetest of emotions. It was the thaw of a beautiful Arctic summer day.

"Yes," assented the wife, looking up into her husband's face, her own overflowing with feeling—"yes; and his nose is patterned after yours. But deserted by his own mother, the poor little chicken, and he isn't weaned yet!"

Her eyes brimmed, overflowed, and she raised her handkerchief to them; but fortunately Gay, who had slipped out of

the room a few minutes before, now slipped back, bearing in her arms the beautiful child, almost leaping out of them at sight of grandpapa's beard. Like his mother, little Meade had a way of opening his eyes in a sort of luminous surprise, smiling down at a brand new world, which smiled back at him. He did so now, when, lo and behold, how quickly the scene changed. King Baby reigned supreme. The kicking, crowing little fellow was translated to the longed-for heights of his grandfather's great broad shoulder, and from there he looked down on a soberly smiling grandmamma, who immediately laid down her knitting and went through the rites of adoration, chanting a little refrain, which was ever so much prettier in reality than it could be in representation, "Ganma's pitty nittle baby; where is ganma's pitty nittle boy?"

The cherub had brought in his train a troop of sprites that harnessed themselves immediately to Mrs. Westover's sorrows and rode off with them; also to the colonel's anger, and rode off with that too. Never did sunlight glorify a fairer scene than this: the colonel bending his venerable head with its seventy years of snow over this bud of infancy. Dimpled hands twisted themselves into the long gold-white beard, and granddad strode up and down the room with his baby burden upon his back, piping out in a basso, rather tremulous upon the upper notes, "Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross." Healthful old age blends delightfully with infancy. Innocence and wisdom confronted each other, hope and experience, majesty and simplicity. Dimpled hands are mighty to undo the knots which care has tied.

The runaway Rector of Evelynton carried his bride across the border-line to distant cousins in Carolina. He expected a shock; and, as shocks are disagreeable, his plan was to bide away until this one was over, and his people, tiring of his absence, should receive him again with open arms. This, however, was not to be. The parish of Evelynton, being composed of people interrelated to the seventh and eighth and ninth degrees of cousinship, took up the quarrel against the rector with a good deal of spirit.

"It seems to me that the world has turned its back on us," he said one day. "I'm tired of living on a slice of cold shoulder. I believe I'll send in my resignation to the bishop," and he did.

Shortly after this, he wrote to a friend, "Werewocomico's busted, and I'm off to Carolina. Tar-city is a growing place;

we'll grow with it. I've a nice little wife, and she's not empty-handed either."

Offers were made to relieve the Westovers of the care of little Meade. "I love him like my own child," Mr. Hoggard wrote; but the colonel fought manfully to keep his grandchild, and, if the truth is to be told, the Reverend Philip, having performed his part by means of a rather hysterical epistle, did not regret the yielding of the child from that time forth to the Westovers, "the whole clan, cousins German and cousins Rooshan," the rector added to his wife, in the privacy of their home; "the whole tribe may have the raising of the young one, for all I care." Perhaps Mrs. Hoggard was not so philosophic, but she made no show of resistance. Her third matrimonial adventure was her only true love-marriage, and it cannot be denied she was happy, as the world goes.

Little Meade Westover did not lack for instructors—very charming ones, too. The sheep that grazed the wide-spreading meadows of Lady's-Meade; the cows knee-deep in the salt creek; the squirrels peering at him as he darted in and out of the woods; the horses that seemed to be in a kind of mystical communion with Hard-times the coachman. His first lessons were the beautiful tides that swept twice a day into the bosom of Lady's-Meade, with messages from the far-off ocean; about the time for the coming of crocuses, the birth of lambs, the pairing of birds, the blossoming of the privet, the leafing of the trees, the season for crabbing, the places for nesting or laying of hens, the ripening of nuts, and the final coming of those thin layers of winter ice on pond and pool, that only occasionally thickened sufficiently to bear upon its surface a

merry laughing boy, who knew how to bully, in the most charming fashion, a doting grandpapa and grandmamma; who knew how to lord it grandiosely over a dozen little darkies, the children of old slaves, squatting on the remote edges of the plantation, but who followed "Li'll Marse Tawm Meade" with the fidelity of vassals. Lady's-Meade had a king who ruled with absolute sway, and that king was little Tom Meade Westover.

His aunt Gay only was not his subject. She dared to oppose his lordship. She often led him to the upstairs chamber, where his father's portrait hung above the narrow wooden mantelshelf. Then, constraining his restive limbs to an interval of quiet, she would tell him, holding his hands in hers, of the father whom he had never seen, but whom he should see some day standing in clouds and look-

ing like the kings he read about in his story-books.

"Then he will say to you, 'My son, have you always told the truth? have you always shown courage? have you always loved honour? If so, you are my own loved son.'"

"But, sister Ga-a-y" (the gracious southern custom dictates this title to the young aunt)—"but, sister Ga-ay, can he know if I don't tell the twoof ev'wy ti-ime?"

Gay assured him that his father would know if he failed in truth at any time. She wished to give the little fellow a model, and those interviews in the spare bedroom, with that real yet unreal father looking down upon him from the mantel with mournful grey eyes, struck awe into the lad's soul. It was the beginning of reverence in his nature. Gay was always

reminding herself that Angela had a part in this boy, and that it must be minimized. Yes, Angela had a part in her boy; she had given him his soft bright curling hair, the dimple in his left cheek, the slightly receding and rather lax chin, and, lastly, the high pure voice, which promised to be a tenor some day, but which now made you think of larks and running brooks and choir-boys—of all things, indeed, that are young and glad.

Gay reflected, with some pleasure, that when he grew to be a man a beard would cover the chin he had got from his mother, and that then his face would be dominated by the deep-set grave eyes which even now were the very prototypes of his father's. In like manner, she hoped that he would outlive any of the inherited tendencies received from Angela; that he would then be every inch a Westover.

Grandmamma entertained the boy with Bible stories; but, unfortunately, he soon outgrew her mild imagination, and transferred his interest with unflattering eagerness to sister Gay's more robust fancy. She was a young teacher, heated with theories, looking for quick, sudden results, like the answers to arithmetic problems, and you could trace the phases of her own growth by the character of the lessons she gave little Meade. Occupied at first with such literature as young women love, if they be fanciful—"The Faëry Queen," "Comus," "The Rape of the Lock"—her mind revelled in flowery masques and fairy comedies. She carried her sketch-book, and, with Meade, rambled along the arms of the creek that wound in and out, Briareus-like, through miles upon miles of sedge, burnished to a rich warm gold in the late fall days, and quaking

gently with the tide when it rose and circled the mud with arc of silver.

But Miss Westover did not sketch as much as she pretended to. She would sit under a thick-limbed holly-tree and read, while the lad roamed about, dipping his toes into the water, and sculling the flat leaky boat which belonged to Crutch Amos, but which lay moored most of the time high and dry among the sedges.

"Wha-t is you readin', sis' Gay?" Meade asked one day, bounding up the bank whereon she sat, and sprinkling squirts of mud far and wide.

"I am reading a beautiful story, Meade, all about the fairy king and queen. Would you like to hear it?"

"Ye-es," drawled Meade, a trifle peevishly. "But what is it you dwopped?"

He picked up a *carte de visite*, repre-

senting a man; the young lady had been using it as a book-marker, but Meade's spasmodic movements shook it from the book to the ground.

"Who is *he*, sis' Gay?" inquired Meade, holding the picture in his grimy fingers, and surveying it with pleased curiosity. The face was that of a young man in the prime of life, and decidedly good-looking. He was dark, thin, and there was a mingling of mirth and irony in the brown eyes and about the corners of the mouth, which last was partly concealed by a curled moustache. "Who is he, sis' Gay?" insisted Meade.

Miss Westover blushed at the twice-repeated question, took the photograph from the boy's hand, and plunged it into the depths of Spencer's "Faëry Queen," the book she held upon her knees; but, as she did so, she encountered an eager look

on the boy's face, for, with the quickness of childhood, he had marked that blush in her cheek, and was not minded to let the subject drop. Children are ever on the alert for a revelation, and are impatient to search into that which is hidden. Almost from the first does the soul realize that it begins and ends in mystery, which leads up to solution.

"Who is he, sis' Ga-ay?" demanded the boy again, imperiously, stamping his foot this time. His lordship was not accustomed to being denied anything that he wished.

"H——" began Gay, hurriedly, but she had hardly breathed the aspirate than she merged it to the following: "Oh, he is Prince Charming!"

"Then tell me all about him. Tell me about *Pwince* Chaw-ming," ordered Meade. He began to be sceptical about

fairies, but he believed in kings and princes, and hungered to hear about them; they were such nice people, always having their own way about everything, just as he himself wished to do.

You should have heard what a nice story Gay told, and what a fascinating fellow she made of her prince. She described him so accurately that Meade thought he would surely see the prince some day and recognize him. Sitting on the roots of a holly-tree, hugging his knees, he fell into reverie. When he roused, it was to ask, "When I'm grown up, sis' Ga-ay, will I be a pwince too, and have evwything my way?"

"Ah," thought Gay, "these stories have a bad moral for my little egoist. Henceforward I must tell him tales of heroes."

It is to be feared, however, that even

Miss Westover's heroes bore a striking likeness to Prince Charming. Still, the woman developed quite as much as the lad; and the flowers of Elizabethan literature were exchanged for the cold white rose of philosophical thought. She took to reading Thomas à Kempis, Emerson, and histories of the Mystics. Women do not, as a rule, scale the higher peaks of literature unaided. What was the source of Gay's energy? Who fastened spurs to her intellect, and set it the task of a noble errantry? Was it love, ambition, or what? To tell this would be to reveal her history, which, being long, requires a volume to itself; suffice it to say that she related to her nephew, when she had moved to this higher plane, allegories full of symbolism, and tried to make him understand the existence of soul—not an easy task. "What is it like?" the young

neophyte would ask. To the answers that it was like a drop of dew, a star, a rose, a butterfly, he would shake his mop of yellow curls discontentedly, for the intuition of childhood often outsoars the laboured analogies of the mature mind. "Where is it? where does it stay?" he would inquire.

"Nowhere. It is not a thing; it does not occupy space," Gay would begin to explain; then, seeing the sceptic look out of the boy's clear eyes, and perceiving the futility of such an explanation, she added once, "Some people say, Meadie, that it dwells in the eyes."

Meade gave a long, earnest look into Miss Westover's eyes, which were grey like his own, very large, and very lucid; then he shouted in a wild burst of delight, "I see it; I see it! I see your soul, sis' Ga-ay, and it has the face of a little

child." He had seen himself reflected in her eyes.

From Colonel Westover Meade received his first lessons in politics, and the old knight used all the eloquence during these first lessons which he might have applied to grey-beards and wiseacres. "When you come to be a man, Meadie, don't you let them ever call you a rebel, or your father, or your grandfather either, my boy. Remember this." And the colonel would stroke his white beard and look down at the child whom he kept on his knee, and the child would look up with straining ear and widening grey eyes for the burst of rhetoric sure to follow, and which, with a young animal's instinct, he enjoyed somehow, though he could not understand it. "Remember this. Virginia, your native State and the State of your ancestors"—the lad was taught that the

Westovers were his only ancestors—" was not part and parcel of the Union. She allowed the Union, she gave out of her bosom territory to the States which formed it, and she produced the men who framed it." He always spoke of the Union in the past tense. He was one of those Virginians whose patriotism had never been sullied by office-seeking; it was not, therefore, with him the question of policy, but the question of sentiment. "Teach this to your boys, when you have them, as I am teaching you now." (Little Meade swelled with a vague sense of importance.) "One generation must hand its knowledge down to the next. Teach them this, that Virginia was an empire in her own right; that she was too high-minded to brook being dictated to by those upstart States which owed to her their very being. When they gave the order, 'Give up your

slaves,' your native State passed into the Constitution of the Union the prohibition of slavery from the very first; but the decision was reversed out of compliment to the North, my boy. Don't forget that." The war was as fresh with the colonel to-day as when its first battle-trump sounded. "The war from which your old grandfather is still smarting was no question of slavery, but of States rights, the rights of the freeborn man and the gentleman enlarged; and if there is one thing that is plain in the Constitution it is States rights. It was several years after the war of American independence before a union of States under one government was agreed to; even then it was an arrangement made for convenience, and from which any of the States could withdraw at pleasure. When the Convention decided that all rights not conceded to the

general government should belong to the States, separately and individually, Partrick Henry foresaw that trouble would follow if these rights were not properly defined. He withheld his vote for a time, and would have overthrown the agreement if Washington had not come to him, begging him to withdraw opposition. The country was exhausted with war, and anxious for peace. But Partrick Henry, Meadie, was the shrewdest one of them all."

The colonel would set the boy down very gently, in order to take a turn or two up and down the room, giving his audience of one the benefit of some very effective spread-eagleism, delivered in a voice mellowed by years upon years of fruity port and a lifetime's training in after-dinner speeches.

"States rights is the corner-stone of the

Union, Tawm boy, defended in the past by the pen of Jefferson, the tongue of Henry, the sword of Washington, the heart of Lee, and it should be preserved for ever by the common sense of every true-hearted Virginian. You'll hear a deal of talk about centralizing power and every man's being equal, but don't you believe one word of it all; it's nothing but rant to carry an election."

The little boy swallowed huge draughts of politics from the days of babyhood, and he believed, of course, in his grandfather as in one of the prophets. He well remembered the first time that his grandfather unfolded for his entertainment the roll of heraldic parchment, gay with crests, quarterings, and letterings. From one illumined shield to another the old gentleman traced back with his finger his family line to the first one worn by

a chief named Westover at the battle of Hastings.

"Your birthright, you see, my boy, is freedom, identical with State-freedom. Look at the American flag"—showing a gaudy print. "What are these stars and stripes?—colours which the Union is so proud of, and which the sun has seen waving above icebergs and over equatorial seas. Why, it is nothing more nor less than the coat-of-arms of a Virginia gentleman."

Little Tawm, intoxicated by heraldry and oratory, lifted dilating eyes to his grandfather's face.

"Yes, Meade, the flag of the United States is a plagiarism upon George Washington's coat-of-arms. The people who try to patronize Virginia now, borrowed the stars and stripes from his shield to decorate their standard with."

Surely it was not his relations' fault if, by the time little Meade was grown, all the Angela in him was not trained out of him.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT is to be feared that the colonel looked down on the State of North Carolina very much as the proud sisters did in the fairy tale on Cinderella. He divided it into three parts, marked by three different orders of inhabitants, called by him Sand-crackers, Swamp-angels, and Moon-lighters.

"So they've gone to live among the Swamp-angels, have they?" he said, when he heard where the Hoggards had settled themselves. "Right within the smell of the Paugatuck marshes; they will have a time of it, living on pork, laziness, and the

damned low country chills. It won't hurt Hoggard, but, by all the thunders, it will kill that pretty little girl he persuaded to run away with him."

The colonel still stuck to the idea that Angela had been, in some fashion, beguiled to run away against her will, and he still thought of her with a remnant of tenderness; but Mr. Hoggard he could not forgive.

"The madam would have it he was a rough diamond; to my mind, he is rawness incarnate," said the colonel.

"A half-baked clergyman," was Gay's retort, in the midst of one of her stringent laughs.

"That's it, Gaysie; they're turned out from the seminary before they're quite done, and we country neighbourhoods too often get the benefit of the rawness charged with pomposity. This last quality

is a social crime, the only cure being knowledge—the very last medicine, by the irony of nature, that the pompous man is going to take."

Why do human beings recoil from pomposity in fellow-man more decidedly than from other and more disintegrating qualities? We all desire recognition and appreciation, but the pompous man desires more. He calls for adoration—a demand too exacting for one human being to make of another.

The Paugatuck marshes did not, according to the colonel's prophecy, kill Angela. She ripened into a matron of a variety much seen, handing down degrees of her beauty to numerous little Hoggards, all promising to preserve in the world that type of man and woman who live to possess; whose highest flowering out is in the direction of fabric, function, office;

and whose vision never grows acute enough to mark the dividing-line between the sign and the thing signified.

She belonged to the class of woman who gets sympathy without any other appeal than that of opening her eyes upon the world in a series of sweet, swift, luminous surprise which disarmed criticism. By degrees the rough western *r* dropped away from her; only the childish lisp remained. To have looked into her face of florid amiability and judge her, would have seemed cruel.

"Why, she's as much of a child as the rest of them," people said apologetically. So Angela slipped through life with very little pinching from that hag Criticism, or mawling from that fiend Responsibility.

"I certainly do sympathize with you, Mrs. Hoggard," said the doctor's wife, on

an all-day visit to the rector's wife. "You must have your hands good and full with such a brood as you've gathered around you. Oh, the responsibility of children! they're a great care."

"Oh, I don't mind," was Angela's reply. "Children are no more trouble to raise than pigs; give them something to eat and to cover them, and they will bring themselves up better than you or I could do—eh, Phipsie?" and the mother played with the ears of the smallest reflection of Mr. Hoggard, very much as she had played with those of her poodle in the far-off Denver days.

"I married in a hurry," the Reverend Philip was wont to say to his parishioners, with that mixture of jocoseness and assurance, marking the man who has made a love-match, and knows himself to be the sole hero of his household. "Unlucky

the wooing that's long a-doing. As soon as you get together a pig, a cow, and a kitchen stove, take to yourselves a wife." This he said to the young men of his congregation, waving his hands with a complimentary flourish that led all eyes in the direction of Mrs. Hoggard, who usually sat near, with a good-natured simper on features rapidly departing from the almost Greek line of symmetry, and taking on an almost bovine heaviness and tranquillity.

Such is apt to be the evolution of what some are pleased to call the natural. The animal life may be innocent, but hardly virtuous; its tendency is to deaden joy as well as sorrow, and the double deadening takes away all possibility of compensation.

Neither Harrison nor his wife (Fanny Steptoe) cared to remember the children

of the Hoggard line with silver and gold, as they had done the Westover baby. They were shocked by their *protégée's* third marriage; still, for some years they heard at intervals from Mrs. Hoggard. One day, laying aside the last of these brief, ill-spelled letters from Paugatuck, Mrs. Harrison said to her husband, musingly—

"Well, she lived her own life, after all; and yet not altogether, for she was the toy of circumstances. Westover saw to the toy's being placed in safe hands; he willed that the circumstances of life should hedge her in, as the garden wall does the rose-tree. That the flowers have not been stolen by vagabonds, that she lives in a conservative society, that she will die a shielded wife, is still his work; his influence will be over her to her dying day, but it never could have changed her. Then

she has children, too; that must be a powerful influence for good," murmured Fanny, softly.

Harrison shrugged his shoulders slightly; he remembered that desertion of the Westover baby. "Yes, I suppose that active motherhood will help to keep her straight; not so much the sentiment of motherhood as the actual process of maternity."

"Oh, Clayborne, Clayborne!" The wife tapped his shoulder, and said reproachfully, "How hard you are upon the poor little woman! Only think, you once thought her so bewitchingly pretty."

"The *beaute de diable!* I never could abide her after—after Meade Westover's death. The tables turned for me then; her beauty lost its effect; I thought only of the reality of things. And you did your best, Fanny, at first to bring me to this

opinion; but women are so soft-hearted, so contradictory." Clayborne Harrison tapped his wife's thin cheek, upon which health was beginning to plant its first pale rose.

"We saw her beset with dangers of which she had no appreciation — an Hesperian apple with seekers around, ready to be plucked. That her life has been quietly virtuous is, perhaps, the result of accident, but we must be thankful for that." Mrs. Harrison had the woman's impulse to glorify the domestic.

"P-ff!" Harrison gave forth an explosive significant of disgust in the midst of a shrug. "Fanny, you sentimentalist!" He pulled the sentimentalist's ear. "Do you suppose accidents are of any value ethically?"

Westover would have been surprised, if he had returned to earth again, to make

acquaintance with his friend in the character of a moralist, given to reading much, and talking more on a subject once flouted.

"It was a waste, a cruel waste, of Westover's powers to mate himself with such a wife, Fanny; but you could neither persuade nor convince him. I tried both; he would answer, 'Why should I consider myself superior to any man or woman? why should I separate myself from them by any line of caste? Humanity bids all men be brothers, and if religion exists at all, it exists a free gift.' 'Yes; but,' I answered him the night before his marriage, 'neither humanity nor religion bids you take any woman who happens to be in danger for your wife. You advised me against Angela Cloud; why will you persist in marriage with her?' Then he would say, 'Harrison, you and I are as

different as the poles. With you, marriage would be an affair of the heart; with me, it involves the conscience and a great deal more. I feel myself driven to marriage with Angela Cloud, else I should become the prey of remorse.' His lofty look, that stern jaw of his, made me think of Orestes. He was a queer compound to have come out of the old South. He always admitted that the South possessed only social and religious standards, but no intellectual ones. In his fatalities he resembles the Greek, but in his philosophy the Middle-Age monk. He had a passion for self-renunciation. His will-power seemed to me, in those days, almost superhuman; for mine, my dear Fan, is a cherub of very recent growth—you its godmother."

Mrs. Harrison smiled sunnily. What wife does not like to hear such words as these? "And if he had lived—what then?"

she inquired softly, for it must be remembered that to Fanny Steptoe Meade Westover was still the hero; women, like artists, set a nimbus around the heads of the men they admire.

"He saved her humanly, and gave her a higher plane to pitch her life upon; more no man can do. He saved her, and now that it all is over, it is well that he should be saved from her, or she would have made his life miserable."

Harrison thought that lower individuals of the human species should be sacrificed to the higher, that the highest ideals might be preserved for the race. Westover, on the other hand, had maintained that the highest must suffer for the lowest, insisting that the man may die, but his ideal never; his motto having always been, "Better to fail grandly than to succeed meanly."

"I often wondered whether his failure to awake response did not make him bitter. Once I received a characteristic answer something like this." (Fanny opened her eyes to the ceiling, looking for the idea to drop upon her from above.) "'Let apples and pears ferment and turn acid,' I think he said, 'theirs is the vege table soul; ours is the spiritual, which, like God-essence, should be sound, sweet, and wholesome.' Westover was a model friend —none like him; but"—Harrison shook his head with critical sobriety—"but he was a southern gentleman of a fine type turned fanatic. Block is rough, radical, rampant, a noble but a glorious soul." Harrison, like most men who consider themselves apostles of common sense, carefully excluded his friends from the category. "The difference between the two men, it seems to me, Fan, lay in the fact that

Westover cared for the poor man; Block for the poor as a class. Do you take it?"

Harrison and his wife spoke so earnestly that they were not aware of the entrance of a third person into the room, until he stood directly in front of them, holding out his hands, and shaking back his bang, in weight and colour like a Shetland pony's.

"Block!" cried husband and wife; and there followed a warm greeting.

Block sat down, a smile of unusual brilliancy moulding his sallow jaws into pleasant outlines, and giving to his sombre-coloured, oftentimes fierce eyes a peculiar, piercing sweetness. In him it seemed as if brigand and benefactor had grappled for the mastery, and it was hard to tell which of these characters was most legible on his squarely-cut features. He had only just

returned from a lecture tour which had kept him in the east a year, so there was much to talk of.

Block, for the most part, was the speaker, answering Harrison's eagerly-put questions with energy and purpose. He was not a man of tinsel and sparkle; his words were hurled with a kind of fury that refreshed the minds of either friends or audience, as the case might be, like thunder or lightning. It was Fanny Steptoe who, on the first chance, led the conversation from lecture courses and associations to a more personal subject.

"You went to Virginia and to Lady's-Meade?" she asked eagerly.

A strange golden darkness fell over Block's face at the question; he did not yield to a longing for reverie at the mention of Lady's-Meade, but roused himself to say, "Yes, I went there at

Mrs. Westover's warm invitation, for Meade's sake; I stayed some days"—he coughed nervously—"for my own. It is a noble old homestead, Mrs. Harrison, fit cradle for a noble race." Ernest Block was generous in his praise.

"The colonel and his wife?" said Fanny, interrogatively, longing to hear to the smallest item all concerning these friends known to each other only in the spirit.

"A saint and soldier yoked. The colonel is Nestor living on a southern plantation, clinging to old ways with a splendid stubbornness which is in part picturesque, in part amusing. His wife is matron, sister of mercy, chatelaine, all in one; innocent as a child, wise, in true wisdom, as Sybil. Pshaw! none of your heathen words suit Mrs. Westover."

Block stopped abruptly. The Virginia

episode had given him a new experience, not so painful, perhaps, as it seemed absorbing. Harrison took long, slow puffs at the cigar, his best-beloved after-dinner companion. Block, who never smoked, played absent-mindedly with the contents of Fanny's work-basket.

"Go on, Mr. Block. I am dying to hear about Westover's sister Gay. Is she as fine a girl as—as I have always imagined her?"

Block nodded; but such an answer was too vague to suit enthusiastic Fanny. She began her catechism with physical points, as women do.

"Describe her, Mr. Block. I know she is dark. What else? Her points, you know."

Block, thus interrogated, leaned back in his chair with a quizzically affected air of complaisance. "Her points? Well, she

is somewhere about five feet six in her shoes; has a ring of sunburn visibly marked on her wrists; and wears her nails very little above the quick, much shorter than would be prescribed by the modern dictum. Bah! I never realized until I saw Miss Westover how vulgar is your perfectly groomed woman who seeks to appeal to man through his nose."

"Nonsense, Mr. Block. I am sure you do Miss Westover an injustice if you mean to describe her as untidy," Fanny protested. She had looked for pretty details, such as are generally doled out to young women—the swan's throat, the greyhound's carriage, the bird-like moving of head giving sudden glimpses into eyes mellow as those of the oft-cited doe. She was disappointed.

"If I had given you any such idea, I will stop and say not another word, Mrs.

Harrison. The truth is, I am sorry I saw her."

"Sorry!" was the exclamation in return from Harrison and his wife. The husband laid down his cigar, and turned a curiously attentive ear to his guest.

Block realized that here was not a place to stop; he still adhered to that tenet of the Catholic Church, which teaches that confession is the first step to a fault conquered. "Yes; she disturbed me."

"Like her brother?"

Block nodded doubtfully, continuing with the analyst's impartiality, "Miss Westover is of the kind of nobility which repels more than it attracts; that is, most people. She is of a profound humility, not altogether sincere, because it shows she values the quality of humility from its æsthetic standpoint, and humbles herself that she may

be exalted." In spite of an impatient movement from his hostess, he went on with intention. "Her intense gratitude for appreciation touches overmuch on the note of vanity; she is positive, denunciatory, and will have to work out to the resplendent ideals which she will never be satisfied without realizing. Her mother's unquestioning faith has been a sort of counter check to her. I can see that with half an eye."

"Mr. Block"—Fanny was a great champion of her sex—"I declare you haven't a spark of chivalry."

Block shrugged his shoulders, and, to the lady's scolding tone, answered meekly enough, "When I first knew myself I was a brute."

"Allow yourself to be tamed, then. Do you know, I see a magnificent creature peeping out from behind the shoulders of

that very disagreeable woman you have been describing."

"There's the mischief," answered Block, with another shrug.

"Block, I'll swear you lost your heart to the girl." Harrison voiced his wife's thought.

"That is a frivolous way of putting it" —Block grew vehement in his sincerity— "I could not help seeing the divine woman in her swim forward to meet me in every lift of her brows to enthusiasm. Ah, Mrs. Harrison"—Block's frown melted into his most becoming smile—"she is a plastic creature. To watch her taste life, nibble its pleasures, spue out its prejudices, swallow its sweet and bitter, digest its morals, will be a feast for the gods."

It was odd to watch his absorption in his subject. He leaned his head in his hands, contemplatively.

Harrison and his wife exchanged glances. The latter was melted down to the peculiar sympathy of which she was always a willing martyr. Harrison cried out—

"Good heavens, Block! why didn't you go in and win her, if things had come to such a pass?"

"With all my follies, I'm no fool, Harrison. I would not circumscribe the girl with the theories I have laid down about my own life."

"She would be a help to you." Fanny sent forth her admonition in a clarion voice. Seeing Block look fixedly at her, and recognizing his expression, she added peevishly, "What's got into all the men? Why do they not choose the right women?"

"The right woman, as you call it, Mrs. Harrison, would be my destruction; the

wrong one would find me hers. With such a wife as Miss Westover, were she willing to place her heart and her hand in mine, I should settle down into the most selfish of varlets, working for a constituency, on the *qui vive* for civic honours to place at the feet of wife and children. No; that is not the career I have marked out, and given brain and brawn to; no, I fly temptation."

"But Miss Westover, was she aware of this inward tempest?"

Mrs. Harrison gloated upon the incipient love-affair, so enticingly hopeless.

"Not she. She was as serene as the swan on the lake. No; I left her abruptly, with the arrow in my own bosom; there was none in hers. She will marry—fine women do not always, but she will, I think—and it will be the choicest of those hundred and one cousins, with the manners

of a dancing-master and the phraseology of a filigree philosopher. She thinks him a pattern for the want of seeing larger patterns than the one he is cut by."

Block's bitter smile, as he said these last words, prevented Harrison from saying, "You should have shown her what the larger pattern is." Instead of this, he inquired, "You do not approve marriage?"

"Spare me such a cut-and-dried theory. But I do think it is immoral where woman is regarded as chattels, man as purveyor, provider, protector. It is not a utilitarian bond, but a means to a noble end; then only should the idea of it be entertained."

"But you did not approve of Westover's. Like me, you tried to dissuade him from it; and yet there was a strain of this very thing you speak of in it."

"One-sided!" Block shook out the negative. "Westover was a survival of a

highly romantic period; a noble chevalier —if you will. The word I can't abide, but you southerns do, and it has its historic use."

"He was a man who came too late, or too early; who regarded women as a flower to be cherished. That girl he married as an ill-fated innocent, played upon by foul fortune, whose spell he had to reverse. I don't say, annul marriage; but let it stop for a few years, until the coming woman can show the world she can stand alone, except where it is a question of man's highest good and hers."

"What! going so soon?"

Block had risen. Harrison and his wife rose too.

"Yes. I have enjoyed the talk, in spite of being led into making a confession of my own weakness—confession to good friends. Mrs. Harrison"—he took the

lady's hand and pressed it warmly—"acts as a chimney to an overheated nature. I'm a volcanic sort of fellow; but this much I know, and it will please you, Mrs. Harrison, to hear me say it. No half-savage like myself could stay many weeks in that sweet southern home without carrying from it a sort of talisman to remain with him for ever, even when he is several thousand miles away. Good night." He went abruptly as he had come.

THE END.

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